RAMPARTS

MARCH · 1963

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RAMPARTS

THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC JOURNAL

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ESSAYS

A SYMPOSIUM ON JESUIT UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

Jesuit Education: A Layman's View 6
by Edward M. Keating

Jesuit Education: Between Two Worlds 10
by Warren Coffey

The Lay Faculty on the Jesuit Campus 16
by Robert O. Bowen

The Jesuit Discipline of Inquiry 22
by James A. Gowen

HENRY JAMES: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE KEYHOLE 57
by Maxwell Geismar

JULIEN GREEN 83
by Wallace Fowlie

ART

AN ARTIST'S NOTE BOOK 27
by Geza St. Galy

THE ART OF GEZA ST. GALY 73

FICTION

MARIA DA CONCEICAO 47
by Marguerite Lidchi

PROSE POEM

HAGIA SOPHIA 65
by Thomas Merton

LETTERS

LONDON LETTER 43
by Neville Braybrooke

THE MYSTERY OF THE BLUE CARDS 53
an exchange of letters

BOOK REVIEWS 91

COVER

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Published by: The Layman's Press
1182 Chestnut Street, Menlo Park, California

RAMPARTS is indexed in
The Catholic Periodical Index

Photographs in the Jesuit Symposium courtesy of NZN-Verlag, Publishers, Zurich.

VOLUME 1, NO. 5, MARCH, 1963

RAMPARTS is published five times yearly—in January, March, May, September and November by The Layman's Press, 1182 Chestnut Street, Menlo Park, California. Subscription rates: $8.50, one year; $16.00, two years in U.S.A. and possessions. Foreign rate: $9.50, one year; $18.00, two years. Single issue $2.00.

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Application to mail at Second Class postage rates is pending at Menlo Park, California. Postmaster: Please send 3579 to 1182 Chestnut Street, Menlo Park, California. MANUSCRIPTS: Unsolicited manuscripts submitted to RAMPARTS should be sent with return postage and self-addressed envelope. RAMPARTS editors assume no responsibility for unsolicited manuscripts. Second copies should be retained by writer. CORRESPONDENCE: All correspondence, including address changes, should be mailed to 1182 Chestnut Street, Menlo Park, California. Please allow six weeks for change of address; send both old and new addresses to 1182 Chestnut Street, Menlo Park, California.

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Salvador Dali
Wyndham Lewis: Enemy of the Rose
Catholic Higher Education: The Economic Issues
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A Season in the French Theatre
Ford Madox Ford
Les Liaisons Dangereuses: The Ottoman Empire
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Sir Roger Casement: English Traitor, Irish Hero
The Baron Corvo Legend
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Eugene O'Neill and His Theatre
The Jewish Contribution to American Culture
Jesuit University Education
A Christian Approach to Psychiatry
The Negro Contribution to American Culture
William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County

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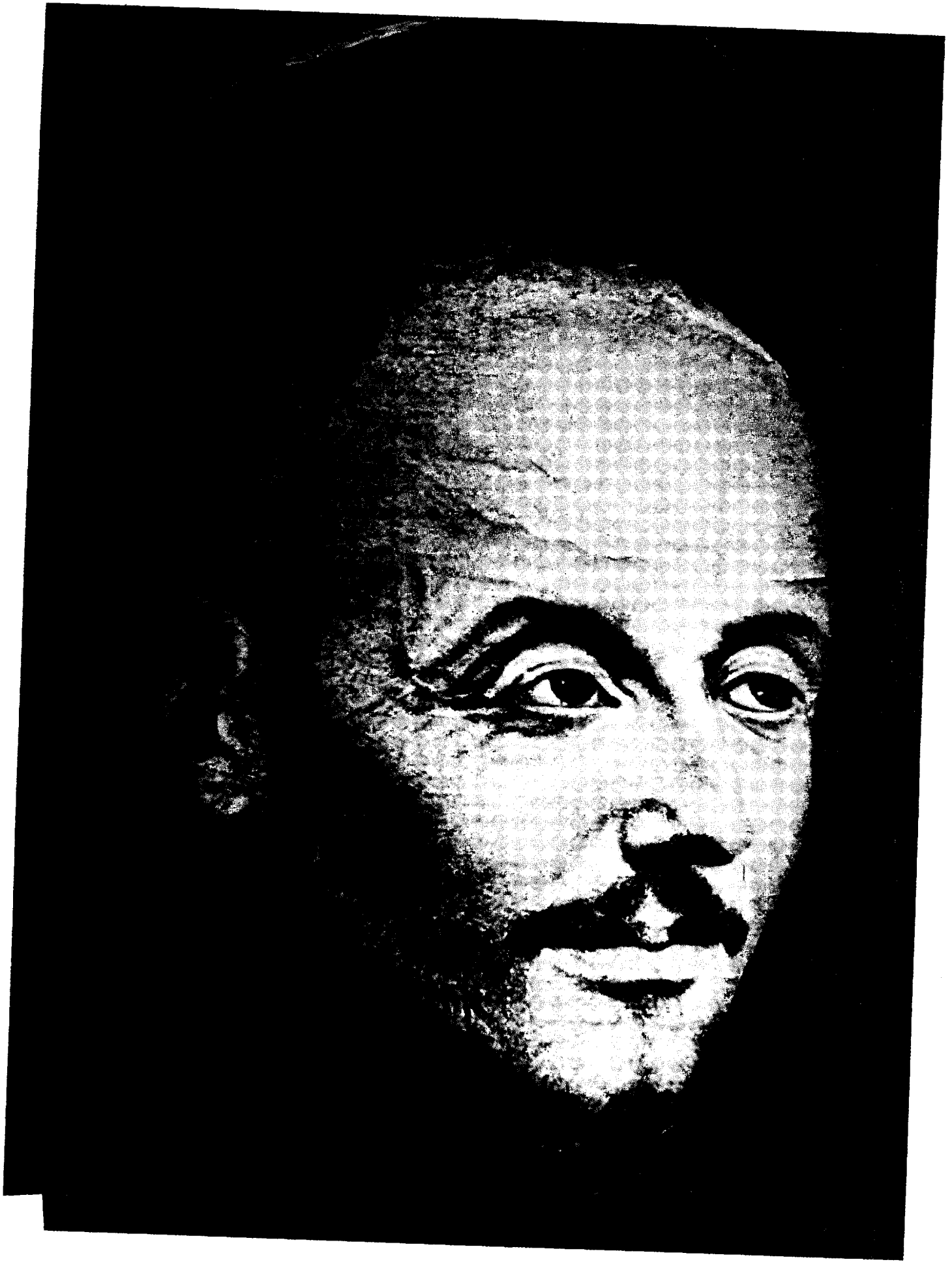

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A SYMPOSIUM ON JESUIT UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

I

JESUIT EDUCATION: A Layman's View

by Edward M. Keating

II

JESUIT EDUCATION: Between Two Worlds

by Warren Coffey

III

THE LAY FACULTY ON THE JESUIT CAMPUS

by Robert O. Bowen

IV

THE JESUIT DISCIPLINE OF INQUIRY

by James A. Gowen

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I

JESUIT EDUCATION: A Layman's View

by Edward M. Keating

EDWARD M. KEATING *is the Editor-in-Chief of* RAMPARTS.

WITH INCREASING FREQUENCY the subject of Catholic education, its weaknesses and its strengths, its failures and its successes, its regrets over the past and its hopes for the future, has been raised in various magazines and journals; indeed, more and more books are appearing, giving strong evidence of concern, to say nothing of interest. A characteristic of this new effort at evaluation and prescription is the fact that almost everything is being written by the participants, the professional educators. Almost nothing is heard from the layman, the consumer who pays the bills.

In such discussions, the layman's view should be valuable. It is required, however, that the layman be interested in education, that he be *concerned* about defects in the "system" which appear to be susceptible of correction. He must care generally about the educational process, about the search for truth, about education *qua* education; and he must care quite specifically (and personally) about education as it affects him and his children. He may not be capable of the cold dispassionate analysis of the professional educator—the antiseptic approach—but the layman in his exposed (and perhaps exploited) position will at least spare the audience those vacuous platitudes which drift, like so much ectoplasm, through the usual assembled *séances* of educational discussion. The layman speaks forcefully, because he speaks in pain.

This, then, I propose as the basis of qualification: a layman's great concern for education as it affects society and eternal ends, as well as it affects his own children and their society and eternal ends. Thus, the entire discussion becomes a plea for excellence.

Any observations by a layman not in the educational field must, of necessity, be based upon observation and not upon experience, although I must note here that I taught for one year at Santa Clara University. This short period of experience in no material way qualifies for professional authority and in no way forms a basis for my remarks. Also, it must be pointed out that all my education was secular due to the fact that I did not become a Catholic until a number of years after college.

WHAT, THEN, IS THE CONDITION of Catholic higher education—as it is viewed by such a layman? The first impression is that there is a tremendous proliferation of schools, an amazing number of orders running them, and an incredible amount of energy and money being invested in this almost amorphous thing called Catholic higher education. But as time passes and general impressions become better focused on certain tendencies, two facts seem to emerge. First, that the Jesuits, more than any other order, dominate the educational scene. Second, that in contrast to secular education, Catholic education, as led by the Jesuits, is falling considerably short of its aims. Indeed, candor requires the admission that those outside the Catholic community (and here I refer to educators) have a rather low opinion of Catholic higher education. One criterion is the matter of Phi Beta Kappa accreditation. Only Catholic University is so honored. There is really no need for recitals; the fact is well known.

It would be vain to indulge in a sort of wailing admission of shortcomings and various failures. What is needed is a clear vision of the present condition to adopt as a basis for anticipating, and planning for, future improvement.

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This, then, brings up the fundamental question of what Catholic higher education should consist of. Ideally speaking, what sort of a college should the Catholic community construct? The answer is both an affirmation and a contradiction. The affirmation is one of Catholic conviction and direction toward a rewarding future for Catholic education. And it is to the Jesuits that I must address the contradiction because more than any order, they have allowed themselves to be seduced into the commission of a cardinal error.

THE JESUITS, who have constructed an educational network of twenty-eight colleges and universities, have, by and large, abandoned their original *Ratio Studiorum* and its goal of developing the whole man, for the American rule of pragmatism. They took the order's admonition to fit themselves to the time and place but without seriously questioning what they were doing. The result was the development of a system that, in essence, tried to duplicate the other American colleges all around them. This developed into little more than "me-tooism," so that in the end little distinction could be made between the Jesuit college and the average American college. Actually, the Jesuits (who are not alone in this) have structured their system in such a way as almost to insure defeat. They have tried to compete with the secular colleges—and on the latter's terms. We can pass quickly from the trivia of sports and extra-curricular activities, although Fordham as well as the University of San Francisco and Santa Clara gave the football world lots of fun, and approach the heart of any college—its curriculum. Here the Jesuits have made a fundamental error—they have placed the emphasis on the wrong curriculum. Science, engineering, business administration, medicine, law, as disciplines do not vary from college to college. There is no difference between an engineer's discipline in a Catholic college and an engineer's discipline in a secular college. $E = mc^2$, whether a Jesuit demonstrates it or whether J. Robert Oppenheimer demonstrates it. Torts and Contracts don't vary between Catholic and non-Catholic; pathology is just that, pathology; the laws of supply and demand, of economic cycles, have no inherent religious connotations.

And yet, these disciplines have tremendous merit—particularly in the modern world—and warrant study. But should a Catholic college, in its peculiar circumstance in America, go after those things as anxiously as it does? I don't think so. To begin with, they are very expensive disciplines, particularly for those who have very limited money to invest. It is almost embarrassing to witness the efforts of small Jesuit colleges trying to compete with such giants as the University of California or M.I.T. in science, Stanford and Harvard in law and business. We simply cannot match them. What results is a disproportionate amount of money and energy being lost in following giants and being sadly outdistanced by them. So far, this implies inefficiency and loss of money, but taken a step further, it raises the question, both pragmatically and philosophically, of what Catholic education is all about.

IT SEEMS TO ME that the really unique and worthy contribution Catholic colleges can make to the present situation of America is in the area of the humanities and liberal arts. Science, business, law, engineering, medicine, can be called "insensitive" disciplines, in contrast to philosophy, literature, history, psychology, sociology, which can be called the "sensitive" disciplines. By "sensitive" I mean disciplines to which both the teacher and the student must bring into play, at almost every turn, their own perspective, their own philosophy of life. A mathematical formula is just that, but an understanding of Kant, an interpretation of Camus, the relevance of Luther to modern history, the forces that motivate hostility, the understanding of social forces, all require a philosophical context in which to be placed. It is here, in these "sensitive" disciplines that Catholic colleges could have such a tremendous part to play in modern society. It is here that the emphasis should be placed—where it counts.

Unfortunately, the Jesuits have not done this. In fact, they have, by and large, tended to play down these disciplines, especially as contrasted with many of the "insensitive" disciplines that they have encouraged, to the brink of financial disaster.

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THERE IS A FURTHER ADVANTAGE to realigning the emphasis: cost. Those disciplines that really are uniquely Catholic cost scarcely a fraction of the present (and past) outlays for laboratories and all the paraphernalia that the sciences require.

In short, revision would create an educational system that emphasizes the Catholicity of mind and not the faulty secularism that dominates almost all the non-Catholic colleges.

This is not to say we should abandon the sciences and the others; it is a matter of emphasis. If Catholics want to *major* in these disciplines, then they should go where they can get the best possible education, the secular colleges. There are some—particularly among the religious—who dread the thought of young Catholics being exposed to the hazard of secularism, particularly as it might affect their faith. There is merit to this. But just as the youth is trained in the various academic disciplines to prepare him for more advanced study and speculation, so too should his studies in religion and philosophy progress so that when he is intellectually mature in his general studies, he will be similarly mature in matters of religion and philosophy. Once in the secular college, the student could continue his religious and philosophical studies under the auspices of his Newman Club, provided these Clubs will develop beyond the social centers which most of them now are.

In the popular mind, Catholic colleges cannot ever achieve stature. Such a mind sees great laboratories, medical centers, engineering schools, football fields, and heavy endowments as the marks of greatness. Let the Catholic campus provide the leaven of Christian culture and ideas. After all, the sciences, particularly those that end in hydrogen bombs, are merely an extension of man's arm. It is the ideas, the thoughts, the philosophies, that fill the mind. And it is the mind that controls the arm.

IF THIS IS THE IDEAL, why haven't we achieved it? I suppose, for a number of reasons. For so long Catholics in this country, particularly those in the exposed position of education, felt themselves closed in by a hostile society that preferred its Catholics to remain charwomen and entertainers, rather than exponents of ideas. It is very easy, under these difficult circumstances, to meld into the academic woodwork and appear intellectually neutral—that is, genuinely *American*, not pronouncedly *Catholic*. I don't think economics can be the whipping boy. Ideas cost nothing. What for years has been lacking in the American Church has been the clash of ideas, the development of intellectuals at all commensurate with the Church's population, a willingness to experiment forthrightly with new disciplines. The Church in Europe has done this for centuries; we have not even begun to approach them in this regard. But times have changed; it is clear that other Americans can accept the idea of Catholic intellectuality, that Rome doesn't dictate 15th Century policies to a 20th Century society (especially well received have been Pius XII's Encyclicals on such subjects as psychotherapy, to say nothing of John XXIII's ecumenical energy that is casting a whole new image of the modern Church in the eyes of non-Catholics).

And yet, American Catholics, despite strong leadership from Europe in general and the Pope in particular, have made scarcely any impact on the current intellectual and cultural ferment that is threatening to revolutionize society for centuries to come. And why is this? I believe the primary responsibility lies with Catholic education, especially on the college and university level. The Jesuits, in their dominant position of intellectual authority, have allowed themselves to approach each new academic year with the same defensive attitudes they had the year before. They have not been willing (or able, possibly) to fit in new ideas with their centuries' old intellectual discipline and their typically American curriculum. And, I feel, for a reason. There are hazards in experimentation; risks in new formulations; dangers in creativity.

For example, psychology is still quite suspect. Some feel that since modern psychology, particularly depth psychology, originated with Freud, whose philosophical meanderings in no way should be an obstacle to appreciation of his extraordinary discoveries in clinical psychiatry, Catholics simply can't have anything to do with

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the subject. This suspicion, this fear of complicity, held back Catholic activity for decades. Even today few Catholic colleges do more than offer a skeleton curriculum in psychology. Sociology, rooted as its origins are, among the materialistic philosophies of the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, is similarly suspect, with the result that the Catholic voice is just beginning to be heard. Further, because St. Thomas Aquinas is the official philosopher of the Church, it doesn't follow that nothing has been done since.

THIS FAILURE TO INVESTIGATE is reminiscent of the reluctance of the public school system to allow courses in Communism for fear of its tarnishing Americanism. Only lately has there been a change. A similar one is needed in Catholic colleges regarding alien philosophies. Literature, incorporating creative writing, for purposes of the present discussion, has been one of the most neglected disciplines of Catholic education. There is something almost skittish about the approach to much of modern literature. There is an appalling aversion to anything sexual; something that has brought the wrath of Jesuits and most others down on Joyce, J. D. Salinger, D. H. Lawrence, Eugene O'Neill, and anyone else who writes novels or plays containing sexual themes. Catholic educators must stop being so afraid of sex. If the educator thinks that by denying his students access to genuine literature he will preserve their chastity, he need only go to the nearest newsstand and examine the visual and literary pornography available inexpensively there. So the chastity and purity of mind do not depend on the exclusion of Joyce. On the other hand, the serious student (and any discussion on education *must* make this assumption), given the works of literature and guided along literary lines and given moral perspectives, will be far more able to bring Christian values to bear upon the subject than if he is given "safe," but pallid instruction.

I suspect that what I am really saying is that Catholic educators must acknowledge the existence of the world in which they live. We do not live in a cloister. This is particularly true of the student. To advert again to the analogy of Communism courses, and their tardy appearance, the Catholic must know, with a profundity that might well be beyond most, a great deal of what is going on "out there" in order that he can cope with it, and it is hoped in time, do something about it. You don't get rid of something by pretending it does not exist, nor do you solve problems when you are ignorant of their nature.

Finally, I want to restate the growing concern of the layman over Catholic education. Fortunately, there is no returning to the past, and fortunately we are leaving the present; our principal fear is that nothing will change; that a dull sameness will characterize the future as it has all that has gone before. Rather, what is needed is a profound re-examination of the educational conscience that will serve as the guide for the achievement of that for which generations of laymen have pleaded: excellence.

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II

JESUIT EDUCATION: Between Two Worlds

by Warren Coffey

WARREN COFFEY, *a graduate of Marquette University, is Assistant Professor of English at the University of San Francisco and President of the USF chapter of the Association of American University Professors. Of Irish lineage, Dr. Coffey is married and is the father of five children. An Associate Editor of* RAMPARTS, *he lives in San Francisco.*

A LUMINOUS PAST in European education, the Jesuits. And a possible bright future in American education, mainly because the young Jesuits coming through in the last few years have been a pretty impressive lot, trained, many of them, in secular graduate schools. But about the present state of Jesuit education in this country, one cannot be exactly panegyrical. Not about the colleges and universities anyway. The Jesuit high schools are a different matter. Many of these are excellent, Campion and Marquette High being the examples best known to me. The Jesuit colleges and universities are best described though in some lines of Matthew Arnold:

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born.

Nearly all the American Jesuit colleges are in this situation in some degree or other, and it is no accident that the aptest description of it is from a nineteenth century poem. For it is a nineteenth century situation. And I do not use *nineteenth century* simply as a club, as is sometimes done when people speak of something they disapprove of as being *nineteenth century*, meaning that it is outmoded or smug or guilty of some other failing they impute to the nineteenth century. I mean it in its literal, in this case, its numerical sense.

To put it roundly, many of the older Jesuits—and it is the older ones who are often likely to be administrators—still see science in the nineteenth century way, as The Adversary. Sometimes science is generalized to Modernism or Secularism, but, however denominated, the thing gets responded to with defensive bluster. Often this takes the form of a quotation from Gilbert Keith Chesterton, the most defensive blusterer of them all. Or it will get responded to with pietism, and the quotation then is likely to be from nobody so much as from Francis Thompson. The process has the fixity of a syndrome and waits only to be named. It even has a classical variant: this consists in reading at the class or at the congregation Macaulay's Tribute to the Roman Catholic Church, always being careful to omit the passages in which Macaulay attacks Rome as a killer of thought and enterprise. These are the dodges of an apologetics gone hollow.

AND THAT, I THINK, is the main failing of the American Jesuits, at least of the older ones, the attachment to an apologetics that no longer works. It is an intellectual failing basically but also one, I hope later to show, that gets reflected in the operational failings of the Jesuit colleges. But the place to begin is with apologetics itself, which is traditionally defined as the "science of defending faith by reason," the word *science* having here its older sense of "organized body of knowledge." To apologetics itself, I can think of no very damaging objections: everything depends on how it is handled. The *Summa Theologica* is a great work of apologetics, also of philosophy and theology, because it does not sacrifice reason to the demands of establishing the faith. And I can take the next step too and concede that the Jesuits, as an order founded in Counter-Reformation times, are going to be particularly attached to apologetics. That is a legitimate and an intelligent response to historical circumstances and part of the explanation of the great Jesuit achievement of the 16th and 17th centuries.

But only part of the explanation. For it is worth noting that Ignatius himself, though no great scholar, was a Master of Arts of the greatest university of his time, Paris. There he encountered and was trained by the most advanced humanist methods, especially for the teaching of the ancient

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languages. And he went on to study the theology of Aquinas at a famous Dominican House of Studies in the Rue Saint-Jacques. Ignatius was thus introduced at least to the content and the procedures of both the main educational systems of his time, scholastic and humanistic. The best book, by all odds, on this entire subject is *St. Ignatius' Idea of A Jesuit University* by the American Jesuit, Fr. George Ganss. Ganss, though conceding Ignatius no great scholar, sees him as a master of practical method cannily incorporating in his schools and in the Jesuit *Constitutions* the best of the ancient, medieval, and renaissance worlds: Aristotle, Aquinas, and the most up to date of humanist methods of teaching. Ignatius was bent on defending the faith all right, *Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam*. But he was defending it in the light of reason and of the knowledge of his time. The older American Jesuits, on the other hand, have often seemed to be just defending the faith with whatever offered—Macaulay's Tribute, Francis Thompson, Gilbert Keith Chesterton.

I HAVE EARLIER described this as a nineteenth century situation. But it really goes farther back than that, to the late seventeenth century as a matter of fact. Let us take as a parable of it the Fr. Simon incident. Simon was a devout and a scholarly French Oratorian priest who in 1678 published a *Critical History of the Old Testament*. It was a brilliant book and Simon is today celebrated as the father of scientific scriptural study. (His book will be best known to readers of a literary turn as the one that occasioned John Dryden's great poem, *Religio Laici*.) Simon wrote it out of apologetic motives and aimed it mainly at the Protestants. He was able to show what is today obvious: that the biblical texts are corrupt and obscure in many places, that the Bible is often historically inaccurate, and the tradition of the text uncertain. Simon, of course, intended these findings to amaze and unsettle those Protestant sects which had contended that the Bible and the Bible alone was sufficient for salvation. For if Simon's findings were true—and they were very thoroughly argued—then it was clear that some kind of teaching authority was needed in the Church, to determine a text if for no other reason. Fr. Simon as a scholar was fully 150 years ahead of his time and his book got suppressed, apparently out of pastoral considerations. For Simon's book, it was feared, would do as much to startle his co-religionists as confute the Protestant enemy. This is a crucial incident in the religious history of Europe. For Simon was offering to the Church an apologetics based on the most advanced scholarship. His offer was declined, though, and he lived out his life in retirement. There is a beautiful dramatic irony here, for the findings advanced devoutly by Simon in the 17th century came back to haunt and scandalize Christian Europe in the 19th century when they were put forward by the Higher Criticism.

But I have used the Simon incident only as a parable and prelude, an ominous prelude to the things that would happen in the 18th century mainly because Catholic apologetics in Europe refused to confront honestly the scientific advances of the 17th century. And the fact that the Jesuits themselves produced an occasional scientist does not materially weaken this argument. For theology and philosophy were the subjects traditionally emphasized in Jesuit education, and here no serious attempt at accommodation was made. And to be brief here, let me quote a recent article from *PMLA*, a journal not much given to round, unqualified assertions. The article is by Henri Peyre and is entitled "Religion and Literary Scholarship in France." It is an article very much worth looking up in any case, but its most remarkable sentence, it seems to me, is this one: "... not one great book upholding traditional religion, not one moving statement of Christian faith can be found in the whole eighteenth century." Peyre is talking here about France and the Roman Catholic Church, and the situation was very different in England and the English Church. But here certainly is a strong indication that the old apologetics was dying in Europe. And I do not think that can be explained away by pointing to the fact that in the eighteenth century the Jesuits were suppressed. The increasing desperation of apologetic arguments can be seen even earlier, in Pascal's famous Wager, for example. And in the nineteenth century, of course, that old apologetics would be simply routed by science.

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THAT IS THE SITUATION the older American Jesuits inherited, and they did not deal very intelligently with it, I am afraid. For they often resorted to defensive bluster, seemingly modelling themselves on the Irish Jesuits, who have never been the ornament of Europe. Attachment to an outworn apologetics is the explanation of what can only be called the terrific intellectual deadness of the older American Jesuits. A curious confirmation of this is the large-mindedness, the philosophic habit of mind that a man like Newman was able to retain, a man who had not been trained in and who was skeptical of flashy demonstrations of philosophic or doctrinal points. Newman had come into the Church not on the basis of such demonstrations, rather because he had been convinced of its truth by reading the Fathers and the history of the early Church. One can only admire the large-mindedness exhibited in a passage like this one from *Idea of a University*, a book written in the 1850's when science seemed most dangerous of all:

> *I still say that a scientific speculator or inquirer is not bound, in conducting his researches, to be every moment adjusting his course by the maxims of the schools or by popular traditions, or by those of any other science distinct from his own, or to be ever narrowly watching what those external sciences have to say to him, or to be determined to be edifying, or to be ever answering heretics and unbelievers; being confident, from the impulse of a generous faith, that however his line of investigation may swerve now and then, and vary to and fro in its course, or threaten momentary collision or embarrassment with any other department of knowledge, theological or not, yet, if he lets it alone, it will be sure to come home, because truth never can really be contrary to truth, and because often what at first sight is an "exceptio," in the event most emphatically "probat regulam."*

How different this is from defensive bluster of the sort I was always hearing as an undergraduate at Marquette, particularly so in the theology department.

I had, for example, an instructor who used to proclaim that he could prove the existence of God in a single sentence. I am afraid I have forgotten the sentence, and it may or may not have been from Gilbert Keith Chesterton. But it certainly was defensive bluster and an affront to anybody's reality sense. I remember trying to work out the arithmetic of it: How long would it take this man to convert the world, simply by going around and repeating his sentence? And having proved the existence of God by a single sentence, perhaps he could prove that the Catholic church was the true one by a single clause, a dependent clause. And then he could bring the world not only to God but to Rome—in just under seven weeks by my figures. And why were his superiors keeping him in the classroom anyway, a man, after all, capable of that reach of thaumaturgy? The theology courses were variously titled in the catalog, but they all somehow became courses in apologetics, as though we were being equipped to pass our lives debating with Tom Paine or Bob Ingersoll. In one year I encountered Macaulay's Tribute to the Roman Catholic Church four times: it was twice read at me in theology classrooms, and once from the pulpit, and once it appeared in a theology textbook. But I never heard anything of the liturgy, nor of the Fathers of the Church, nor read the Old Testament, nor knew that some intelligent things were being done in my time by Catholic theologians. But the worst thing was that we were always being told these theology courses were the great center of our Jesuit education. Anybody who took them knew they were full of crankery, fanaticism, and special pleading and that they were often taught by men who simply did not belong on a university faculty. The one course I had which was an exception to all of this was one on Christian Marriage. But the theology offerings as a whole were nothing short of scandalous, the worst of the dead world. Having said all this, I have the pleasure of saying too that the Marquette theology department has been much reformed in the years since I left.

THEN THERE WERE the annual retreats. Two of them I remember particularly, a perfect contrast of styles. One was given by a Jesuit who had been a chaplain in the War, a very devout man and, though of a somewhat broad turn of phrase, a master *rhetor*. For three days though, he

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chose to describe the horrors of hell, asking us to imagine it in terms of all of the senses: its stridor, its smell, its fires, and so forth. On the third day many elected for Jesus. It was a stirring experience, that retreat, but when some time had passed, I was able to see that that kind and pitch of hell-fire preaching was only the devotional form of the defensive bluster I was hearing in theology classes. The other retreat master was a glossier product altogether. He "never mentioned hell to ears polite." He was the author of works still to be seen in the pamphlet racks and likely to have such titles as "God the Executive" or "Chats on Chastity." For two days he kept telling us he was going to give us the key to success and happiness in the world, this when he was not dropping names. The key to worldly success and happiness, it turned out on the third day, was weekly Communion. He personally guaranteed it. About that time I had just learned that Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* is on the Index precisely because it teaches that piety guarantees prosperity, a heresy. It has always seemed to me the Index's finest moment, though I would gladly give it up to be rid of the Index. But every Catholic student at Marquette was required to be in attendance for three days in the University church to hear it advanced in the most theatrical of pulpit styles that weekly Communion will guarantee success and happiness. In both retreats the most questionable kinds of doctrine were all right because they seemed likely to advance piety.

The world view behind proceedings like these can be best described by a quotation from a George Santayana essay. Santayana writes ". . . imagine the stars, undiminished in number, without losing any of their astronomical significance and divine immutability, marshalled in geometrical patterns; say in a Latin cross, with the words *In hoc signo vinces* in a scroll around them. The beauty of the illumination would be perhaps increased, and its import, practical, religious, and cosmic, would surely be a little plainer; but where would be the sublimity of the spectacle?" Now if God the Father had been an American Jesuit of a certain age, he would have thus arranged the stars, I have no doubt, though he might have changed the motto to something more readily recognizable as Jesuit. But that is plainly not the universe God created, and the apologetics that pretends it is has got to be abandoned.

THE EFFECTS OF THE OLD apologetics can be seen in the operational failings of Jesuit education too. I will roundly concede that Jesuit education has a financial problem that would simply scare less devoted men out of the business. The Jesuit colleges do not have at their command the money of the great state plants nor the endowed private ones. And the Jesuits have faced this with really admirable bravery. But with more bravery than logic, I am afraid. For if they are going to talk of the great financial problems of running a college, why do they multiply the problem by running twenty-eight colleges? Unless this is the old naïveté which filled America with mediocre Catholic colleges in the belief that mere numbers of them would demonstrate the Church's commitment to knowledge. That is the operational form that defensive bluster takes. The American Jesuits, I would say, are stretching themselves too thin. I have recently talked to a member of the Georgetown staff—Georgetown is one of a handful of first-rate Jesuit colleges—who told me the Jesuit faculty there has been appreciably weakened in recent years in order to staff Wheeling College in West Virginia. This is a bad situation, the most serious of the operational failings of the Jesuits, I would say, and the only one where there are no signs of improvement. Right now the Jesuits run some of the best Catholic colleges in the country. But they also run some which, in a phrase of Sir John Hawkins, "would scarce refuse a degree to an apothecary's horse."

At least three operational plans, each more imaginative and intelligent than the present one of aimless and endless expansion, duplication, and proliferation, readily suggest themselves. All three have difficulties, but not more formidable difficulties than present policies meet: (1) An operation modelled on the Paulist one of Newman centers on secular campuses, perhaps by the forming of Jesuit research institutes on these campuses. The Paulists have not made the mistake of saddling themselves with real estate and have been able to stay highly mobile. Also they are where

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most education is going on in our time, the secular campuses. (2) Forming Catholic colleges in the secular universities as the Canadians have done. As something like this has recently been done in Iowa, the plan can no longer be dismissed as visionary. (3) Deciding to restrict operations to the running of strong liberal arts colleges and staying out of programs (graduate and medical) which present impossible money problems and automatically dictate deficits and second-rateness.

In other operational areas, the Jesuits have been making great gains. Atrocity stories about this or that administration refusing to let professors assign this or that dangerous author to their classes appear to be largely a thing of the past. Philosophy departments tend to be the last holdouts here, and even they no longer pretend that Aquinas was the last philosopher, or that the ones coming after him exist more to be confuted than read. Also, after "long choosing and beginning late," the Jesuits have been sending their best men to be trained in the secular graduate schools. Defensive inbreeding and insulation in the seminaries was one of the forces that for so long perpetuated the deadening hold of the old apologetics. The French and British Jesuits stayed free of that, the French because even seminarians are required to do a tour in the army, a tour which makes insulation impossible—a bad law working here at least to good effect. And the British Jesuits, almost all of them anyway, are sent to the Jesuit college at Oxford. Certainly the French Jesuits, probably the British ones too, have more often produced large-minded and committed scholars and thinkers than have their American counterparts. Also, one still encounters among older administrators in the American Jesuit colleges men who simply do not know what they are doing, men who think of teaching, for example, as "light, clerical work" and impose on faculties impossible teaching loads. But in this area too, some notable progress has been made, and at Georgetown, for example, teaching loads are very reasonable.

Having been long about the dead world in Jesuit education, I want to end by saying something about the colleges which have escaped this deadness, and about developments which suggest a possible bright future. This new world is farthest along at places like Holy Cross and Georgetown and Boston College—an excellent school which often gets underrated because it operates in the shadow of Holy Cross—and St. Louis, and Fordham, and, in some departments, Marquette. Here the Jesuits conduct what I regard as the finest Catholic colleges in the country. These schools have got over trying to "Win one for the Gipper," though Marquette has only done so recently, and they have got over the Francis Thompson-Gilbert Chesterton phase of parochial pietism. All of them have creditable admissions standards, and many of them have honors programs. Their strength is in their liberal arts colleges though, rather than in the overly ambitious graduate programs some of them are still trying defensively to conduct. All these schools have long been using laymen on their faculties, and in most of them good relations exist, St. Louis University being one exception here.

But of all the recent developments in Jesuit education, I should say the most promising are the new theology and the emergence in the younger generation of Jesuits of a number of first-rate scholars. Theology, to take that first, has finally thrown off the old defensiveness and is bringing into the classroom the results of the scholarly and critical activity of our time. It thus has for the first time in the Catholic colleges a content that goes beyond the Baltimore Catechism. And it has something of the large-mindedness of the man who has done more than any other to advance it in this country, Fr. Weigel. In literary scholarship, and that is the field where I see the journals, a number of younger Jesuits are making valuable contributions, quite out of the Fr. Gardiner range. I would single out Fr. William T. Noon, the author of a fine book on James Joyce, also, I should say, of the best article yet done on that elusive writer. James Joyce was a great writer. He was also a man who said "*Non serviam*" to the Irish Jesuit brand of Christianity. Both Joyces are in Fr. Noon's article, and both are there with greater thoroughness and balance than anybody else has managed. In work like this the American Jesuits seem to be coming of age and to be giving promise of a bright future.

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III

THE LAY FACULTY ON THE JESUIT CAMPUS

by Robert O. Bowen

ROBERT O. BOWEN, *novelist and critic, is best known for his World War II novel,* The Weight of the Cross, *which has been highly praised by Father Harold C. Gardiner, S. J., in his* Norms For The Novel. *Mr. Bowen has taught at several Universities, including the University of Santa Clara and (currently) the University of Dallas. An Associate Editor of* RAMPARTS, *he lives in Texas.*

IN A RECENT LETTER from a colleague fleeing a Jesuit university in—to be charitable—impatience, I came across the following: "The position of the lay faculty member on a Jesuit campus is both intolerable and absurd." The remark is worth considering since Catholic higher education in America is largely Jesuit and since Catholics have begun to look at education and intellectual life and to ask just where the Catholic lay intellectuals are. For one thing they have made no broad slash of brilliance on the Jesuit campus.

There are many reasons why American Catholics have not put forward an intellectual cadre comparable to the New England Brahmins or the Jewish or Negro intellectuals. Catholics are not a folk, and instead of looking within their own group for cultural leaders, they tend to look to the nation at large. The Church is a source of faith but not of politics, philosophy, or even cooking recipes. In a large part the general failure of the lay faculty at Jesuit universities to develop intellectual leaders, on even the parochial campus level, is a result of common American Catholic non-folk attitudes.

Aside from such theorizing, the laments of lay faculty members in Jesuit institutions are many and varied, but they tend to fall within certain relatively regular patterns. Laymen rarely complain of ill will or dishonesty or politicking, favoritism or the like, which are the common complaints at lay institutions.

The Jesuit administrator is ordinarily pleasant, charitable, well-meaning, almost avuncular. But he doesn't listen. The little jolt of anguish one often feels just after closing an interview with a Jesuit administrator is the knowledge that beneath the superficial kindness and the patience, the administrator simply didn't listen, that the words used by a professional lay person do not exist for him. The Jesuit doesn't wish to be uncooperative; rather he cannot see that anything outside his own Order is significant enough to make any ultimate difference in the career of the university or Catholic thought. Being outside the Order, it doesn't really signify.

THE JESUIT OF TODAY differs in certain important respects from his predecessor. On the surface he appears the same, and to one not working closely with him, he may seem no different from those dedicated men who died in pairs in England under Elizabeth I or were driven out of the great Jesuit empire in South America. But there is a large difference.

Ignatius Loyola was a man of considerable spirit, and having dominated his own strong nature, he trained his followers to channel their energies into constructive enterprises. The Society he founded is known in history as an organization of great *élan*. Even its enemies looked to it as a spring of vast intellectual prowess and unbending commitment. At some time in the history of the American branch of the Society of Jesus a change came about. Though this is not the sort of thing Jesuits ordinarily discuss with laity, I have discussed it at elaborate length with a Jesuit friend on many Sundays as we walked together in the hills near Los Gatos, California. Thus I can speak with some authority on the matter in spite of a lack of actuarial evidence.

My Jesuit friend agreed with my interpretation and added that both the topic and the conclusion were common talk among his colleagues in the Order. My point was that at some time in the history of the American branch of the Society,

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the older Jesuits decided that the Society could not survive in this predominantly Protestant and strongly anti-Catholic nation unless it subdued its *élan* temporarily. At that point the older men began to encourage vocations among patient and far-seeing youths who would wait through "the captivity" as it were. In time the patient young men became old and ruled in their turn. In the process, since the difference between patience and lethargy is not particularly objective, many lethargic men came into the Society. As these new Jesuits reached dominance in the Society, they chose people like themselves. Gradually the search came to be not so much for patience as for "young men who would not make trouble," and finally for "young men who would not make effort." At that point the Society became an organization of followers rather than an organization of leaders, and now, trapped by a fait accompli, it is unable to reverse itself.

Evidence to support such a contention is that among the would-be Jesuit intellectuals today we find one major policy: agreement with the leaders in the general culture. Far from pushing Catholic thought, our Jesuit thinkers strain to *justify*, or say *respectablize*, Catholic thought within the *superior* patterns advanced by non-Catholic or even anti-Catholic cultural leaders such as Barth or Tillich or worse Salinger or Sartre. The design here, the cultural pattern, subordinates the Jesuit to the Protestant, the Communist, the non-Christian. Unfortunately, the Jesuits do direct American Catholic thought, and without any question they control in its significant aspects American Catholic higher education. That they should consistently follow a ghetto attitude in their direction is lamentable, but it is a matter which the laity cannot work out with the Jesuits. The Society must solve this problem from within because by its nature, and apparently its rule, it cannot enter a dialogue on the problem with a lay Catholic.

SURELY MY JESUIT FRIENDS will be offended at the fact that I offer criticism at all, a feeling which itself is an index of the very problems I cite, particularly the lack of consideration for any Catholic authority except Jesuit authority. The failure of real respect toward lay faculty is immediately apparent in the Jesuit's asking—a frequent case—that the lay teacher change a student's grade because the Jesuit "knows the family" or is "looking after the boy." Beneath such casual requests lies the assumption that the grade is quite arbitrary and that only a personal standard applies —charity perhaps. How deeply would the same Jesuit priest be offended by a lay professor's recommendation for leniency in a penance that priest assigned a penitent student!

In fact, the often violently defensive reaction of the Jesuit clergy regarding criticism of any aspect of its universal authority has almost precluded an honest approach to the problem of lay authority in Catholic education. *America*, *The Catholic World*, and numerous other Catholic publications have touched the idea from time to time. Common practice is for a priest to mention it as a problem, after which the matter is gently pushed aside. Should a layman broach the topic —as one innocent did in *America* a year or so ago —he is immediately attacked by a withering fire of correspondence, a sort of *auto da fé* by mail order as it were.

Ironically an incidental effect of the Jesuit attitude toward higher learning and professionalism is the tendency for the Order to give considerable respect to methodology courses which do not basically require a deep intellectual discipline of the sort that might conflict with the Jesuit intellectual authority, namely Business Administration, Education, and Engineering. Although these methodologies are under pressure across the nation at large as lacking an organizing principle and therefore being sub-professional, they are advancing rather than declining on the Jesuit campus. Naturally the advancement of these disciplines serves against the Liberal Arts and basic Sciences.

THAT METHODOLOGIES with heavy emphasis on memorization should appeal to the Jesuit academic mind is not surprising in light of the catechistic tradition of Catholic learning. None the less, this emphasis is especially unfortunate in advancing exactly the opposite result to that which Catholic doctrine in general, and even the latest Papal Encyclical in particular, require: individual judgment. Where the student is put

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through Saint Thomas by forced memorization of passages, as is frequent in Jesuit curriculums, he learns not the profound method of judgment Saint Thomas tried to elucidate but rather the mere words in which judgment might be uttered. That is, the student's mind functions like a digital computer in simply matching a specific reply to a specific query; whereas Saint Thomas would have required a function more nearly like that of an analogue computer since the latter requires judgment in analyzing similar essential patterns and not mere detail or mere words. This particular ambiguity has lain at the core of Catholic education for centuries, drawing the wry humor of even Rabelais in his hilarious anti-academic charade, "The Great Argument For Truth In The Cathedral."

A professor familiar with non-Catholic university teaching, whether Protestant or non-sectarian, will recall his annoyance at students who rejected his authority or refused to understand the principles involved in his reasons for judgment. Such a man entering a Jesuit university usually notices an odd difference in his new students. They will be troublesome in that they will not directly refuse to accept his comment, but that they will resolutely refuse to understand *that he is reasoning*. Often in a conference one will reply to his complaints with a frustrated "What do you want me to say?" In fact, they indicate an inability to comprehend *that judgment is possible*.

Students of this sort are a common product of Jesuit high school training, and they present a special problem almost impossible of resolution. They are not merely stupid or untrained. Their training is extreme, particularly in memorization. But their minds are so chockablock with elaborate Latinate terminology and complex though undigested concepts that they are likely to soar off the earth of common sense and concrete fact at a touch; and though a professor would expect such students to be extremely sound in logical analysis, they rarely "think" as clearly as a mediocre agriculture student at a state college.

Minds such as those described here are very useful in industry at the lower engineering and junior executive level and for general use in business as clerks. Such minds cannot produce the judgment essential at the professional or managerial level. They belong to a class that looks healthy, meshes smoothly into the administrative machinery, and obeys by nature. They do not know what disobedience is. A moment's thought will clarify that such is the common product of the Jesuit—and by influence general Catholic—education in America. Though partisan bias is somewhat responsible, it is quite certain that Catholics are in part not leaders because their training precludes leadership to them. They make good law clerks; thousands of them become librarians; they often become police and military personnel. Very rarely do products of Catholic training become artists of rank or even criminals of imagination.

These observations, it is noted, refer not to Catholic doctrine but to the forms of education common throughout American Catholic culture and particularly encouraged by Jesuit educational systems. In short, what they point to is the refusal on the part of the Jesuit to tolerate the consideration of judgment at any level, from any but a Jesuit.

CERTAIN FACTORS in the training of Jesuits contribute to our problem, for there is a Jesuit mind just as there is a military mind or a feminine mind or a criminal mind. The Jesuit, being a member of an Order, is submitted to a tremendous mental discipline. He is trained until he reaches full understanding of the universe in philosophical and theological terms. Now, it is no small thing to be, as the clerical member of the Society of Jesus appears to be to a layman, completely trained. Although I do not think any Jesuit of my acquaintance would claim perfection in his conscience, I believe that every one I ever met could place in his trained mind any problem I turned to him. He could program it and absorb it as a digital computer would. The anomalies of modern life may trouble him as engineering problems. He may struggle to clarify a matter to a student or to organize a phase of an institution. But the major problems of modern times, the centrifugal effect of multiplying frames of reference —sociology to anthropology to psychology to social psychology to political science and ever on-

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ward—these new ways of seeing do not bother him inwardly. He has essentially been trained to relate them to patterns already learned. In fact, the Jesuit has been trained so thoroughly in philosophy and theology that he cannot see the worth of other disciplines. He has been, we could say in the computer terminology, "programmed."

While the modern layman is troubled by problems of orientation, the Jesuit is what a psychologist calls "fixed" in his attitudes and so does not make adjustments of himself to the world. Rather he adjusts the world to himself.

Literature to the Jesuit is apparently a popularization of philosophy. Perhaps the figure is strong, but essentially most Jesuits consider a novel true in about the way a competent criminologist considers *Dick Tracy* true. That is, the criminologist acknowledges that little bits of police procedure do slip into *Dick Tracy*, while by and large the strip is hardly a reasonable reflection of life in a metropolitan precinct. To the Jesuit, novels, epic poems, tragic drama, all of fiction must appear either a crude effort to illustrate philosophical or theological principles, or it must be a crude effort to present historical fact painlessly, and quite naturally inadequately.

Since such is the Jesuit attitude toward lay disciplines and professions, it is hardly surprising that Jesuits do not take seriously the problems of the Liberal Arts on the Jesuit campus. No Jesuit university can present a man of letters with anything like the status, on his own campus, of a Jacques Barzun or an Archibald MacLeish, and the Jesuit influence does control American Catholic thought so that no Catholic campus, as being subject to Jesuit influence, would take a layman seriously enough to allow of such status. Certainly Columbia and Harvard are more responsible for the fame of Barzun and MacLeish than the men are responsible for the fame of their universities. What Jesuit university would consider, even locally, using a man in this fashion?

A Jesuit is a man with a vocation and an Order. He thinks in terms of vocations, and the end of his vocation is service to God and the Society of Jesus. The Jesuit's ends cannot lie in this world. Theoretically all the things of this world are to him temporal and subsidiary to a higher end. His Order guarantees his interest so. He is allowed no family concerns and is unable to submerge himself thoroughly in a profession. Is there any wonder that he cannot take seriously the profession of the historian or literary critic?

The special vows of the Order further the split between the Jesuit and laity in a profound though obscure fashion. Oddly enough, this particular of the lay faculty problem is probably the most serious, but, because most Jesuits are so pleasant to laymen, it is the most obscure. If the gulf between layman and Jesuit were the result of a quarrel, no grievous harm would result. Sooner or later, well-meaning souls in both factions would heal the wound. Where a natural good feeling exists, a problem is aggravated by that very sympathy.

Because the Jesuit's Order requires his loyalty, his attitudes are scrupulously directed within the Order as regards ends. He has no career, no life, no deep concerns outside his position in his Order. Having no true professionalism, the patterns of a professional career do not occur to him. He looks forward not to becoming an old and established historian, who will be invited about the country to give lectures at adequate fees or to write profitable textbooks. Rather his age will pass in his Order. His life is not cluttered with any hostages to fortune, whose future he must secure. If he is worn out teaching over-loaded classes in Liberal Arts, he will be rested by the Order. He does not go on, as his lay colleagues must, on minimal salary, worrying how year on marginal year he can raise a family, educate that family, and pay for his dying without leaving his widow on Social Security alone and in debt.

To the general run of campus Jesuits, the financing of a family is as obscure a field as the inflections of the Welsh tongue are. A colleague of mine, now a refugee from a Jesuit college, offered an example of this ignorance. This man, an English instructor with a Ph.D. and some years of teaching, was being paid a little over $6,000 annually for teaching five days and three nights a week. He had four children, some in high school, and he could not yet gather sufficient

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money to put down a payment on a house. When he finally left his Jesuit college in despair of communicating the simple idea that his family had been what case workers describe as "underprivileged" for years because of his loyalty, he left his superiors in real bafflement. He is convinced to this day that the Jesuit who let him go believed that he left for some private and personal reason which he withheld out of embarrassment, possibly a bad feeling toward a dean or the like. Actually he liked every person at the college and left for a lay institution with real dread at the reports he had heard of feuding in lay colleges and especially at the dread of the normal American academic pressures against Catholics.

Of course, at most Catholic universities the lack of status and leisure influence the lay professor negatively in another area, and this factor is rigidly sustained on the Jesuit campus. Students are quick to sense the value an institution puts on a man, and they react accordingly. The English or History or Speech professor on a Jesuit campus is not only overworked and underpaid relative to his state college colleague; he is more than usually harrassed by a lack of cooperation among his students as well, and it is worth noting that this lack of effort is most obvious in the freshmen, those who have not yet been led into the slight professionalism of the upper class student, and who conversely react most directly to the general campus attitude as set by the Jesuits. The general campus air toward the Liberal Arts faculty member is one of condescension and contempt, not necessarily through any formally stated policy of the Order or even through a conscious effort but effectively so anyway since the physical indices of salary, teaching load, office space, and such all point to this.

A PARISH PRIEST would perhaps see these problems in their true light. He is not of the world though he *is* in it. The Jesuit is caught up in the Order, and since his Order is a family to him in a rather full personal sense, he is neither of nor in the lay world. No particular reason exists for his ever seeing the professional failure of the lay faculty, the social malnutrition of a professor who can seldom afford a new pair of shoes and can almost never afford a new book.

However, the basis of the problem is neither money nor the teaching load; it is respect for authority. Until the Jesuit clergy at large decide to acknowledge the professional authority of their lay colleagues, American Catholic thought will not advance, or even reach a level of competence, outside the limits of Theology and Philosophy. Until then a flicker of intellectual life may flash up here or there about the country, but no climate will exist to nourish that spark into a truly illuminating flame.

Perhaps the colleague who saw this situation as "intolerable and absurd" was right in the conclusion to his letter. He recommended that the situation would be improved if all lay faculty would leave Jesuit universities so as to bring a little attention to the matter.

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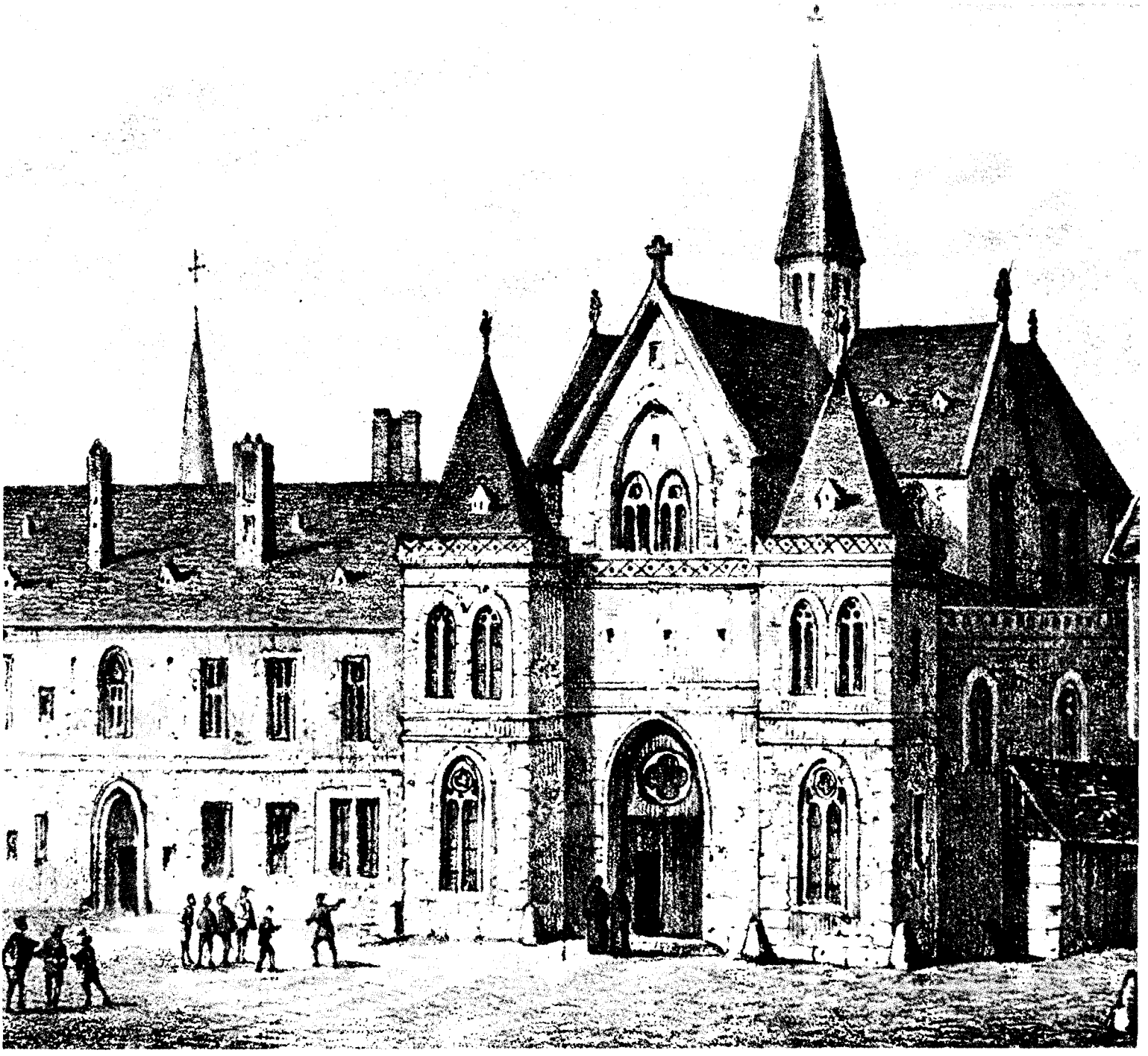

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IV
THE JESUIT DISCIPLINE OF INQUIRY

by James A. Gowen

JAMES A. GOWEN, *a 1956 graduate of the University of San Francisco, is presently studying for his doctorate at Stanford University. He is the author of several textbooks on Freshman Composition, scheduled to be published by McGraw-Hill during 1963:* Accounting Process; English Review; *and* College Rhetoric.

THE FAILURE OF JESUIT UNIVERSITIES and colleges—in fact, all Catholic institutions—to graduate a proportionate share of intellectual leaders has embarrassed Catholic educators for a long time. Popular national magazines have recently publicized this failure, together with the self-criticizing remarks of noted Catholic educators, and all the old contentions which have for years sputtered and flared among those concerned with this condition have been publicly renewed and intensified. That the severest criticism of Catholic educational philosophy should come from those responsible for its implementation is a perverse testament to the good faith of these educators; and although the apologists for Catholic higher education have labeled such criticism breast-thumping, those concerned cannot afford to ignore the valid suggestions for modification which the critics and the facts have demonstrated are necessary.

The charge most frequently leveled at the Jesuits—chiefly because they dominate the scene—is that they are philosophical and moral pedagogues, that they permit inquiry only within areas which they themselves have fixed and circumscribed. It is further charged that they are oblivious to advances in learning and consequently do not prepare their students to accept responsibility in a changing and demanding age. These charges are not easily refuted, and if true even in part, reflect a weakness in the educational system. But they are true to a far smaller degree than those critics believe who advise the Jesuits to efface the charges by throwing open their doors indiscriminately to all the possibilities of inquiry and expression. These critics too often have failed to observe that Jesuit universities have been historically far more intellectual in certain crucial respects than their secular counterparts. Before suggesting stringent modifications, critics would do well to consider the effect of such modifications on the truly unique intellectual qualities which Jesuit education in its better expression possesses now and which it must preserve and extend.

Yet we have ample evidence that opening the disciplines of learning indiscriminately to all the possibilities of inquiry and expression can lead to a more pernicious kind of anti-intellectualism than that removed. The evidence lies in the common intellectual experiences of those attending secular universities, and since this experience is the basis for a good many of the unfavorable judgments concerning the Jesuits, we would do well to examine its conditions in detail.

THE EDUCATION OFFERED in all but a few non-Catholic universities in America is anti-intellectual in respect to three crucial areas of inquiry: theology, metaphysics, and ethics. This assertion may seem unwarranted in the face of the obvious freedom with which teachers and students in secular universities discuss questions related to these subjects. Certainly the educational philosophies of these institutions offer no restraint. Certainly neither the psychologist nor the sociologist is accused of bringing religion into the classroom when he broaches theological or ethical questions connected to his study, nor the physicist of straying from the point when he pauses in his lecture to examine the metaphysical aspect of a problem under discussion. It is the natural bent of the inquiring mind to trace all implications to their logical conclusions, and we respect such inquiry as the mark of an alert and aggressive intellect.

However, these questions are seldom asked

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within the framework of a discipline which can supply the terms, the conditions, and at least the hypothetical object for their being asked. It may seem unreasonable to demand a separate mode for each of these areas of inquiry, yet those skilled in other disciplines such as the physical sciences jealously and justly insist that speculation adhere to the order of discipline. They tolerate the ignorant inquirer only as an act of courtesy because they recognize that the purpose of inquiry is to reach as many valid conclusions as possible whose truth is demonstrable according to accepted terms and methods.

Since theological curiosity is part of the common intellectual experience, we may fairly ask what provisions secular universities have made to amplify and extend theological inquiry. Serious educators have made some effort to offer means within the bounds of law and custom for their students to examine comparatively the representative religions, but the prevailing attitude toward theology is anti-intellectual in that the inquiry made possible is not the kind that implies a terminus. The belief that the student must make up his own mind without the benefit of a discipline to help him do so suggests that choice in theology is idiosyncratic and personal, not accountable for in intellectual terms, and that a sense of urgency about such choice, which a discipline would engender, would subvert the freedom of the individual's inquiry.

Despite the elaborate provisions for metaphysical inquiry in secular universities, it can hardly be argued that these institutions maintain a warm and abiding interest in metaphysics. The American educational community reflects the genial contempt which Americans generally hold toward metaphysics as an exact science, and although students are expected to understand some of the terms of important metaphysical systems and to discuss metaphysical problems at some length as a sort of mental gymnastic, the discipline provided holds that metaphysical inquiry is in its nature indeterminate. The suggestion that metaphysics is the basis for the synthesis of the various disciplines is extremely repugnant, not only to those in the many disciplines but to the faculties of the philosophy departments themselves. The characteristic attitude toward metaphysics, a benign eclecticism, seems to many the truly democratic approach to synthesis at the metaphysical level; and the futility of an eclectic discipline is apparent to only a few men such as Mortimer Adler, who has on more than one occasion upbraided the philosophical community for their intolerably good manners in approaching metaphysical questions.

HENRY BAMFORD PARKES, in a striking preface to his *Puritan Heresy*, argues lucidly that the moral values of Americans are almost virtually without an intellectual foundation. His conclusion is as simple as it is baleful: he predicts the imminent dissolution of the society itself. It would be inaccurate to say that the secular educational community lacks moral awareness, because the contrary is manifestly true; educators and students subject human actions to constant moral scrutiny. Parkes suggests, however, that this scrutiny reflects a natural concern with rectitude but that it is based upon cultural attitudes which have lost their intellectual roots. For if to Kant the order of values was dual, to the American intellectual community the order of values is manifold.

It is difficult to discuss the general attitude of the secular educators toward moral values because it is extremely complex and contradictory. But the distinction between public morality—that morality upon which social order directly depends—and private morality is the clearest one can see. Rectitude is gauged almost exclusively in terms of its social effect, and any notion that an act has any significant consequences beyond the social is put aside. Decisions governing private acts are left to the individual, who must rely on a received attitude or contingency. Consequently, the opinion that all human acts are a proper subject for disciplined inquiry is considered absurd; certainly no secular university has provisions for moral discussion intended to approach a meaningful consensus.

The apparent vigor of theological, metaphysical and moral inquiry in secular universities is therefore deceptive because the freedom allowed such inquiry and the manner of its encouragement approaches intellectual indifference. The vigor of

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the interest, however, does indicate the need for a controlling mode within the educational apparatus. Education must be more than the satisfaction of a student's curiosity and his intellectual pugnacity if it is to be education at all. If such discussion has no discipline in or outside the classroom except that of the bull session, all such discussions in their formal value must be indeterminate.

CATHOLIC HIGHER EDUCATION typified by the Jesuit institutions has a unique claim to intellectuality if only on the basis of the discipline it provides in the crucial areas of inquiry. Even those who agree with this have criticized the rigidity with which the disciplines are maintained, suggesting that far more freedom of inquiry and expression must be permitted the student. To the extent that the Jesuits, as a consequence of their disciplines, have unduly restricted the intellectual curiosity of their students, their educational system has failed. But free inquiry is not the significant mark of intellectuality. Undisciplined, curiosity has neither the means nor the disposition for meaningful satisfaction, and the belief that curiosity is its own discipline, that inquiry leads necessarily to right conclusions, is foolish and unwarranted.

The advice that the Jesuits bring their disciplines up to date is useful, but those who have suggested this necessity often have not recognized the number of practical problems this involves. On the one side, secular universities have no difficulty "keeping current." Where theology is personal, metaphysics eclectic, and ethics relative, yesterday's faiths can be exchanged for today's without embarrassment. Students and teachers alike are free to pursue their interests in any direction and to adopt what seems the likeliest hypothesis because their intellectual commitment is reserved and tentative, without the consequences normally attending conviction. The Jesuits, in order to update their discipline, must carefully consider all aspects of the new avenues of concern and fresh modes of expression before including them within the formal framework of inquiry because they consider intellectual commitment serious and consequential. Caution in this matter cannot be equated with reluctance. If Jesuit educators hesitate to indulge in intellectual faddishness, they have good reason.

Another problem concerns the students themselves. The presumption that college freshmen are fully capable of confronting the knottiest problems in theology, metaphysics, and ethics without a basic understanding of the terms and conditions of useful discussion is common in secular universities even though the guardians of the physical sciences in these same universities insist that the student have a thorough grounding in the particular discipline before examining the more problematical material. Students entering American colleges are by and large innocent of philosophical discipline and must learn the modes of thought before they can hope to deal with problems having a serious intellectual content. It is interesting to note that the reverse order is followed in many secular philosophy departments: the curricula encourages students to speculate metaphysically as undergraduates and to concentrate on logic in graduate school.

IN ADDITION to providing a discipline, Jesuit institutions also encourage the development of an important intellectual quality that can be called the synthetic sense. This quality is typified by the writings of Aquinas, who wrote "in such a way as befits the instruction of beginners." It is unfortunate that this monumental synthesis has not been refined and extended and that its expressive form has been reduced in time to a mere mouthful of weary latinisms. But to the extent that the writings of Aquinas, and the few scattered footnotes which have been added to it, maintain the possibility of synthesis and the means to express that synthesis validly, an emended scholastic philosophy is the only tool of any scope yet devised that can deal with the multiplicity and variety of human experience intelligently.

The constant addition of new knowledge, new hypotheses, and new modes of inquiry makes the maintenance of this synthesis almost hopelessly burdensome. Yet if the effort involved and the attendant bewilderment leads us—as it has led many—to conclude that synthesis is impossible, our only alternative is to conclude that intellec-

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tual values, like the reality which involves them, are manifold. This, however, is so intellectually repugnant that even those who hold it do not obey its corollaries within the areas of understanding and action which their minds can embrace.

An article by the Reverend Andrew Greeley, which appeared in a recent issue of *The Critic* reports figures from a study indicating in part that in the future a representative proportion of Catholic college students intend to pursue graduate study and presumably to go on to accept a share of the responsibility of intellectual leadership. Since the study to which Father Greeley refers was based solely on the students' intentions, his hopeful conclusions have only a tentative validity at this time—a fact he candidly admits. If such figures are meaningful, we may, with Father Greeley, look forward to the birth of a Catholic intellectual tradition in America, a tradition which certainly has had an unreasonably long period of gestation.

Catholic educators, and again the Jesuits in particular, should therefore concern themselves primarily with the ways in which they can refine and augment those aspects of Catholic higher education which are unique; and they should ignore those critics who would have them alter their educational philosophy in order to make their schools more like their secular counterparts— apparently for the sole purpose of encouraging more Catholics to enlist in the physical sciences. If the Catholic intellectual tradition can contribute anything of value to the American intellectual community, it will be the conviction that theology, metaphysics and ethics are proper subjects for intellectual scrutiny; and it will provide the form for a purposeful discipline of inquiry into these areas of concern. And if the secular intellectuals ever consider renewing the idea of synthesis, perhaps the Catholic intellectuals will by then have their own mended and enlarged enough to offer as a model.

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PART II

OF THE SYMPOSIUM ON

JESUIT

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

THE JESUIT VIEW

WILL APPEAR IN THE MAY ISSUE

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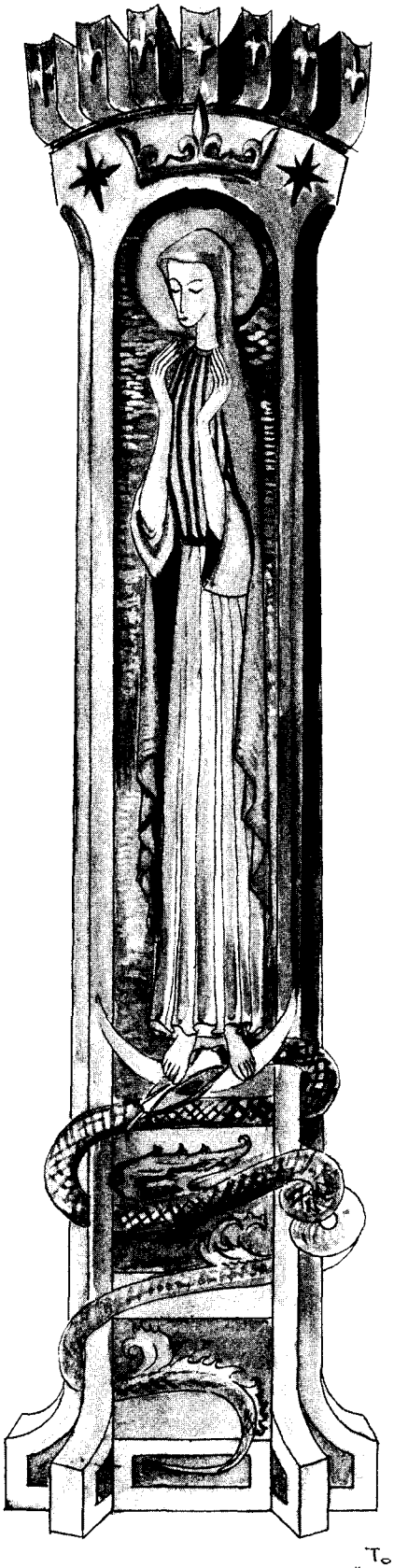
An Artist's Note-Book: Geza St. Galy



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"TRANSYLVANIA, where I was born in 1908, belonged then to the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy. My first impressions were of snow-capped mountains, clear waters, old ikons and rough-hewn faces; of tall firs and a slow pace of life. In 1920, after Transylvania was ceded to Rumania, my family moved to Western Hungary. The transition was painful but I got to like the wide horizons, the changing waters of Lake Balaton and the rolling hills of Pannonia. My studies in Humanities completed at the Norbertine Gymnasium, Keszthely, I moved to St. Emeric's College, Budapest and studies in architecture at Joseph Nador Polytechnicum. The many-faceted cultural life of Hungary's capital opened to me. Music and art absorbed my free time; summers were spent studying with masters in Italy, sketching in Austria and Dalmatia. 1931 found me studying law at the University of Francis Joseph, Szeged, where I obtained my doctor's degree in political sciences in 1935. My preoccupation with art strengthened and by this time took precedence to music. The outbreak of World War II with its political developments hampered my artistic growth and cut me off from foreign sources and influences. During the war I associated with various art projects: acted as architectural advisor to a committee preserving old houses and folk art, exhibited, illustrated religious and children's books, made poster designs and served as artistic co-ordinator of the national spring fair. In December 1948, leaving an unfinished illustration of François Villon behind, I crossed the Austrian border due to the hopeless and worsening situation in Hungary. During the following two years worked in oils, mainly on landscapes and Madonnas. Immigrating to the United States in 1951, a strange new world opened its wide horizons. On the East Coast I still stood under the spell of my classical training and the Bauhaus, but a year later, in Los Angeles, the Western and Mexican as well as the Oriental influence became evident, forming my style into a new one. In 1954, I opened my studio in Carmel. With an architect's eye, I soon realized the potential of ceramic tile and mosaic in Western Architecture. Relying on my early Italian and Hungarian training, I turned to these media at the expense of painting. The results were gratifying, especially on buildings where I could collaborate with the architect—as the Most Precious Blood Church, Concord and the Carmel Plaza. I have exhibited locally and Statewide, had one-man shows but prefer to use my studio as the main outlet for my work. As a member of my adopted community I have served the Carmel Art Commission since 1959 as Chairman and Deputy Chairman; have organized a contemporary Religious Art Exhibit held with its Bach Festival."

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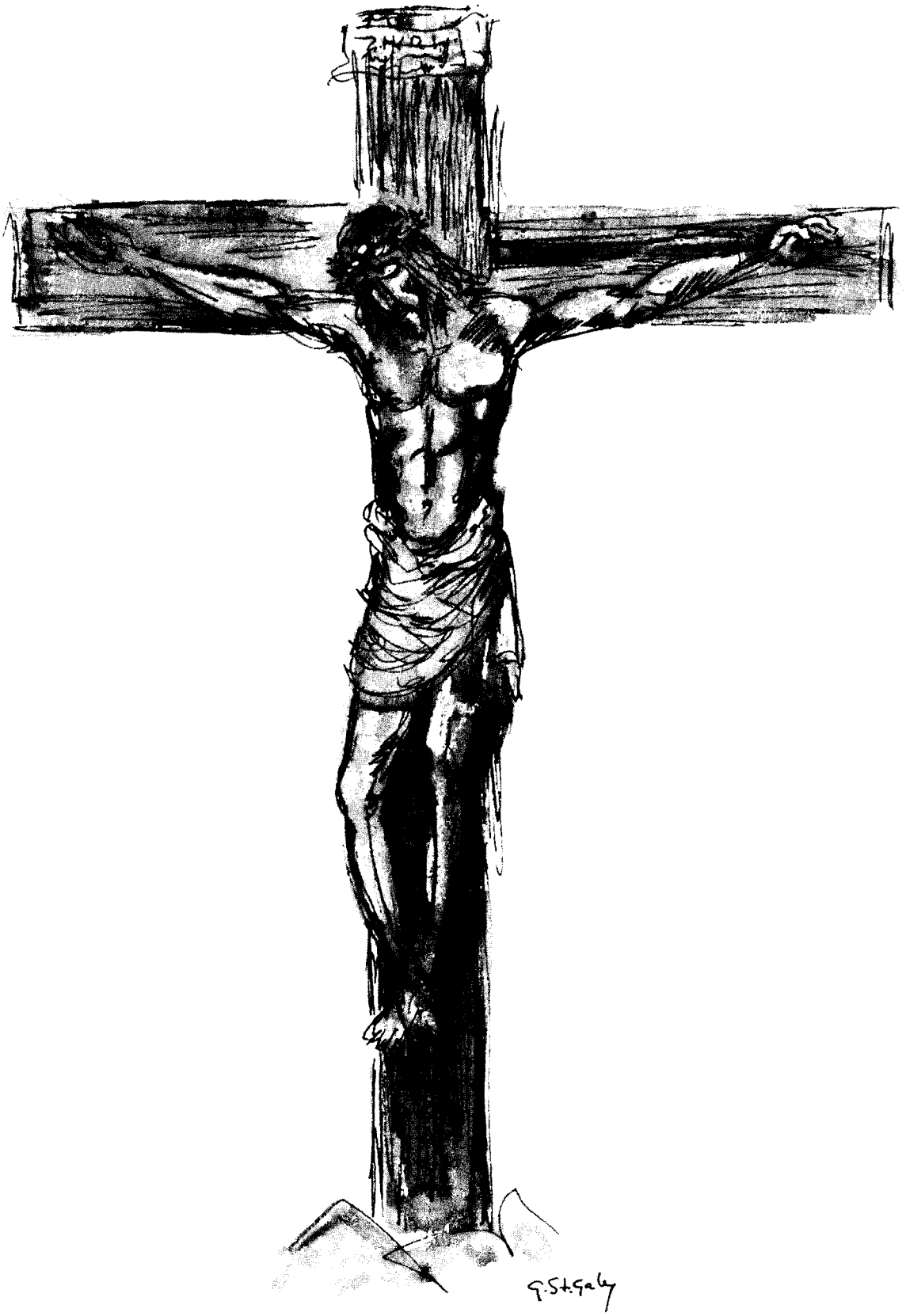

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London Letter

Neville Braybrooke

January 1, 1963

A London letter can serve as the pretext for all sorts of dispatch—literary, political and religious. In Ramparts I prefer to treat the term more strictly as meaning a "letter" about a city whose assumed indifference to the arts is proverbial—"John Bull was always a philistine"—but whose streets are still very much alive with the spirit of Dickens and Shakespeare. Yet no sooner have I bracketed London's most famous novelist and dramatist, than I begin to wonder why Dickens should be put before Shakespeare (as is so often the case in ordinary speech), and why Dickens should be chosen instead of George Eliot?

In turn, these questions breed others. Why is it so easy to be aware of Shakespeare's presence in the streets? Is it because his statue is dotted about in a hundred corners, or because his name is never off the theatre bills? Or, is it because an address like Curtain Road, Shoreditch, recalls a vanished playhouse for which a young Warwickshire apprentice once held the horses? Is it merely the blue plaques outside 48 Doughty Street and 1, Devonshire Terrace which evoke the presence of Dickens? How many of the City men that eat at the *Little Dorrit* chop-house have ever opened the novel, or wanted to? Far more know about Mr. Pickwick than have read about him; his ghost is immortal—under the mistletoe, or in railway buffets packed to the walls. Or, kick a stone and out will slide a Uriah Heep. Or, visit Parliament and up will jump a Lord Coodle, or Sir Leicester Dedlock. This is what I mean when I say that Dickens's presence is still abroad.

Or, make a tour of the taverns at Southwark or Cheapside and there you will meet today's Falstaffs and Doll Tearsheets. The lies that he told after battle are the boastings re-echoed in the cups of a thousand other soldiers. In their time, Gadshill, the Great War, and the German retreat of '45 have all brought the same exaggerated response. Or, visit the Law Courts and watch a modern Mistress Quickly come before a second Justice Shallow. Or, wander through the parks and eavesdrop on Polonius as his advice is repeated by a hundred different fathers in a score of different ways. This is what I mean by Shakespeare's presence being in the air.

By comparison you have only to say "Milton's London" or "Keats's London," to realize how hard the mind has to work to people such a city. And yet in their own right Milton and Keats were also poets of genius at conjuring up a sense of time and place.

You will see that I include Dickens as a poet, and I do so purposely because I believe that the popular bracketing of Dickens with Shakespeare is due largely to the fact that he frequently fell into an unacknowledged blank verse in his prose. For the research student with a metronome there are whole passages waiting to be scanned. Think of the opening pages of a *A Tale of Two Cities*, with their superb introduction of the figure of death as a Woodman. Or, read aloud a rather journeyman piece of writing like *The Chimes*, with its closing paragraph:

> *Had Trotty dreamed? Or, are his joys and sorrows, and the actors in them, but a dream; himself a dream; the teller of this tale a dreamer, waking but now? If it be so, O listener, dear to him in all his visions, try to bear in mind the stern realities from which these shadows come; and in your sphere—none is too wide, and none too limited for such an end—endeavour to correct, improve, and soften them. So may the New Year be a happy one to you, happy to many more whose happiness depends on you! So may each year be happier than the last, and not the meanest of our brethren or sisterhood debarred their rightful share, in what our Great Creator formed them to enjoy.*

In this passage what changes of pitch can be achieved by the skilled reader, and what an actor

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Dickens became when he gave readings from his own books. But let me turn aside from the blank verse aspect to another link that his work has with Shakespeare's, namely his fellow-feeling for the poetry of the streets, a poetry not to be confused with the street poetry of hawkers selling lavender and hot spiced gingerbread, nor with the rhyming slang of cockney speech: *pass the rocking horse* for *pass the sauce*.

I BEGAN WRITING this on New Year's Day, 1963. All along the edges of my bookshelves stood the Christmas cards of 1962, most of which were not so different, at least in sentiment or form, from those of 1862: the crimson coats and ruffles, the log fires, and the rumbling stage coaches were all there. Inside, there were the old jingles that have not changed:

Christmas comes but once a year
And when it comes it brings good cheer.

When you read these couplets, you can understand why Tennyson refused a thousand pound offer to sign a set of them. They have nothing to do with real Christmas poetry, with Milton's *Ode* to the nativity or Longfellow's vision of the Magi. But there is another kind of December poetry which can be called the poetry of Christmas. I am thinking of the spirit of poetry that invades a hospital ward on Christmas Day, that hides itself in the long journeys made every year to unite families, and that bursts out of the characters in Dickens's Christmas books: Trotty Veck and his daughter Meg in *The Chimes*, or the Cratchits and even poor Scrooge at the end of *A Christmas Carol*. The poetry lies in the charity, and it is a poetry which, though it tends to become emphasized at Christmas, is to be experienced in the streets all the year through. It is there, all the time, for the listening. Some of it is unspoken—children wheeling elderly parents down the same pavements on which they had been wheeled fifty years before, or blind men feeding the sparrows. Or some of it is noisy and rumbustious, bubbling forth in pubs such as *The Thomas A'Becket* in the Old Kent Road or *The Deuragon Arms* in Hackney. These are singing pubs, like the old music halls; and this is one compere's introduction on "Talent Night" for Charlie, an old-age pensioner: "I love you, I love all of you. And if I didn't work here there's nowhere else I could go. Except America. Except Australia. Except South Africa. Anyway, I'm leaving this armpit next week. I'm going to Greece and Israel. Play Exodus type music, please . . . Charlie will now sing a song."

LAST JANUARY I was in a Sunday open-air market when I heard a trader, selling hedgehog grease at two-and-sixpence a time, shout: "If you come back next week and are better, say that you met a coloured man in Chapel Street and that he sold you a cure." On another day, near the docks, I listened to two old cronies put life in a nutshell: "How are you, uncle?" "I keep joggin'." Last week, on television, I watched an amateur heavyweight contest between a printer from Redhill and a fruit-porter from Spitalfields. The London boy won. His trainer, it was announced, was known as "the Aldgate Tiger."

Hackney and Spitalfields, Chapel Street Market and the docks, they are all part of the East End. This is not tourist London, the London of Saint Paul's, the Tower and the Abbey, the London round which the luxury coaches cruise every summer afternoon. But do not misunderstand me. I do not want to play down the historic side of London, the splendour of Saint Paul's, for instance, with its soot-covered Portland stone, so neurotic in effect and so in keeping with a City split between God and Mammon. What I want to emphasize is, that whereas the guides will tell you about the exact measurements of Wren's dome, they will be unlikely to tell you about the thanksgiving service that was held in the City last year to celebrate the failure of Imperial Chemicals' take-over bid for Courtaulds. Nor at the Tower will they be likely to tell you of the bear that was led down on a chain every afternoon to catch salmon in the Thames during the reign of Henry VIII, or of the elephant kept close to Whitehall during the reign of James I, whose winter rations by royal command included a daily gallon of wine. Yet it is these oddities, so loved by poets and chroniclers of every age, that have given London the right to be called an eccentric city. Nor has the history of these oddities ended.

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If you fly in via London Airport, there is a hostel for animals in transit. Bed and breakfast for budgerigars cost threepence a head, whereas an elephant costs a pound a day; but if he is more than four foot tall, then the cost rises by an extra six-and-eightpence. Mr. Neville Whittaker, who runs the place, regards this as a modest fee considering an elephant can eat anything up to 28 lbs. of bananas at a sitting. Or, if you go to the Russian Orthodox Church in Bayswater (so admired by Betjeman) at Easter, you will be handed a leaflet with this note added, at the request of the Police: "After the liturgy, one egg will be offered to everyone present at the Exits. Please avoid eating it at once and throwing the shell in the street." Or, you may see the last shots of bigotry scrawled on lavatory walls—or should I say space shots: KEEP THE POPE OFF THE MOON, for example? Or, if you visit the Brompton Oratory —"nothing but a blaze of candles," as Firbank once described it—then you should also visit the public lavatories opposite where a tiled frieze of yellow green acanthus runs above the white-tiled walls and where the leaf mosaics on the floor recall William Morris.

THIS IS THE TIMELESS LONDON which Dickens understood, and where when you turn a corner you may turn a century—but not only architecturally. Close to the Marshalsea debtor's prison in which little Dorrit's father lived, one-man fish and chip bars regret their temporary closure: "Nick the proprietor has sick feet. He will be back soon!" This is the London which Orwell understood, and where down-and-outs can find a night's lodging for one-and-sixpence (in his tramping days there were still "tuppenny hangovers"—you paid tuppence to sleep hanging over a rope). The methylated drinkers have found new covens: once it was beneath the bridges, now it is in the crypts of the bombed churches. "I keeps to meself," said one. "It's the law of the road. Yer mates may give yer another meth, but never a sandwich. That would be too familiar-like." It is a far cry from here to England's Welfare State, with its free dental care and medical check-ups.

Nor does this London of the derelicts feature in the Britain of the glossy advertisements in *Holiday* or *McCalls*, since it is a London about which there is often a strict reticence at home. When Dickens first published *Oliver Twist* in 1850, various aldermen protested that no such place as Jacob's Island existed, with its spirit-drinkers, boy pick-pockets and thieves' kitchens; seventeen years later, in a preface to a new edition, Dickens reiterated that it still did. The truth is that the municipal mentality dies hard, and all over the country there are aldermen who would like to stretch chains across the bays of England so that the waves might break more evenly on the shores. In the world of letters, there are aldermen too.

London has always been a seaport, whose streets have swirled with human driftwood of every kind; throughout history, on the river's tides, there have been swept up exiles and refugees from every corner. Among today's best chroniclers of this milling, cosmopolitan sea of life, are Richard Church, Colin MacInnes, J. B. Priestley (who is grossly under-rated by the serious Press) and V. S. Pritchett. Theirs is a stark picture, painted in primary colours, with Eliot's river sweating oil and tar, and Edith Sitwell's muse finding in the thin winter sunshine a Burning Bush reflected in the window of a slum. There is nothing picturesque in the response. That is left to the hacks whose guide-books pour from the presses, trotting out the same facts, and describing every gabled relic as "quaint." These guides are the equivalent of the sets of Christmas card verse which appear each December. Those who read them at their face value are often amongst those who condemn novelists such as Greene and Patrick Hamilton (another grossly under-rated author) for presenting the seedy side of the capital (a charge, incidentally, levelled against Compton Mackenzie in 1913 when *Sinister Street* first came out).

SUCH SELF-APPOINTED CRITICS should take a walk to Milner Square at the Angel, built in the 1840's. A century's turning has brought little change, and for sheer reformatory grimness I doubt if there is any other square in Europe to rival it. Or, ten minutes' walk away is the second-hand clothes market of Grant Street, where tragedy underlies comedy in most of the bargaining.

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"A boy's vest for sixpence?" There are no bidders. "Be all right for you," says the woman turning to an old tattered man burrowing through a sack of boots, "if you could shrink a bit."

Am I saying, then, that there are two Londons, one of the glossy magazines, and one of the streets and their chroniclers? Partly—although I would like to qualify the statement. For there are really three Londons, or rather three views of London. The first, which is that of the citizens, and the third, which is that of its writers, dovetail; but the second view, which is that of the guide-books, puts the city under rose-tinted glass. It bears no relation to reality. Nor do I think that I can better illustrate this than by pointing to the taverns in which poets from Chaucer to Dylan Thomas have met and talked, and in whose parlours you can still feel the presence of Dickens and Shakespeare.

At their bars you will encounter, by turns, both a savagery and liberalism quite at odds with the notions of a Lord Coodle or a Sir Leicester Dedlock. Today hangings are no longer carried out in public as they were in Elizabethan and Victorian times; and yet despite the privacy that surrounds the execution-shed, neither the publicans nor the customers spare any passer-by a moment of the ghastly ritual that attends a condemned man. But tempered with this macabre interest, you will find amongst the same speakers a liberalism quite absent from the savagery that attends the usual parliamentary debate about censorship, prostitution or homosexuality. In this liberalism of the pubs there is to be found that spirit of charity, which exists in the streets outside. Shakespeare would probably be much more at home here than listening to a lecture on his plays at the Royal Society of Literature, in Hyde Park Gardens.

Above all other qualities, a writer about London must bear charity towards his city. If he wishes his approach to be catholic in the widest sense, he must exert charity towards its citizens.

This may explain why London's best writers have always expressed a strong sympathy for the underdog; for the groundling exploited by a harsh lord, or for the street-sweeper subject to the fury of any angry official. A roll-call would include Ben Jonson, Spenser, Pepys, Defoe, Goldsmith, Dr. Johnson, Blake, Coleridge, Thackeray, John Stuart Mill, Hardy and Chesterton—all writers who experienced what it was to be treated as scapegoats for the practice of their art by "the aldermen" of their day.

I have called London an eccentric city; I would also like to call it a haphazard city, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the way the official authorities have paid tribute to the writers of the past. In Wine Office Court, off Fleet Street, Goldsmith's house is without a plaque, whereas the home of Sir Edwin Arnold, at 31, Bolton Gardens in Fulham, is marked with one. And no sooner have you noticed this than you begin to wonder who Sir Edwin was . . .

When at last you have tracked his name down, you discover that he was a minor poet of the last century who rose to being the chief editor of *The Daily Telegraph*. Meanwhile, the Hampstead homes of Katherine Mansfield and D. H. Lawrence remain without plaques. This is perhaps typical. After the famous Chatterley trial at the Old Bailey, a girl at my wife's hairdressers asked: "Did he write anything else?"

Every Christmas, since the war, it has been my habit to take down a volume of Dickens to read over the holiday. Last year I chose the Christmas Books, including *The Chimes*, which I had not read before. I saw that it was sub-titled "A Goblin Story," and turned back to see what the author had called the others: *A Cricket on the Hearth* was described as "A Fairy Tale of Home," and *The Battle of Life* as "A Love Story"; *The Haunted Man* carried a simple alternative in Gothic type, "The Ghost's Bargain." But it was Scrooge's tale, "A Ghost Story of Christmas," that proved the most revealing. Here, on the title-page in large capitals, was printed:

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

and beneath it in smaller capitals was added:

IN PROSE.

This is the paradox which finally explains John Bull's assumed indifference to the arts. Nor could there be a better winding up to my arguments here: the poetry of Christmas and the poetry of the streets—but both caught in prose, in London, every day.

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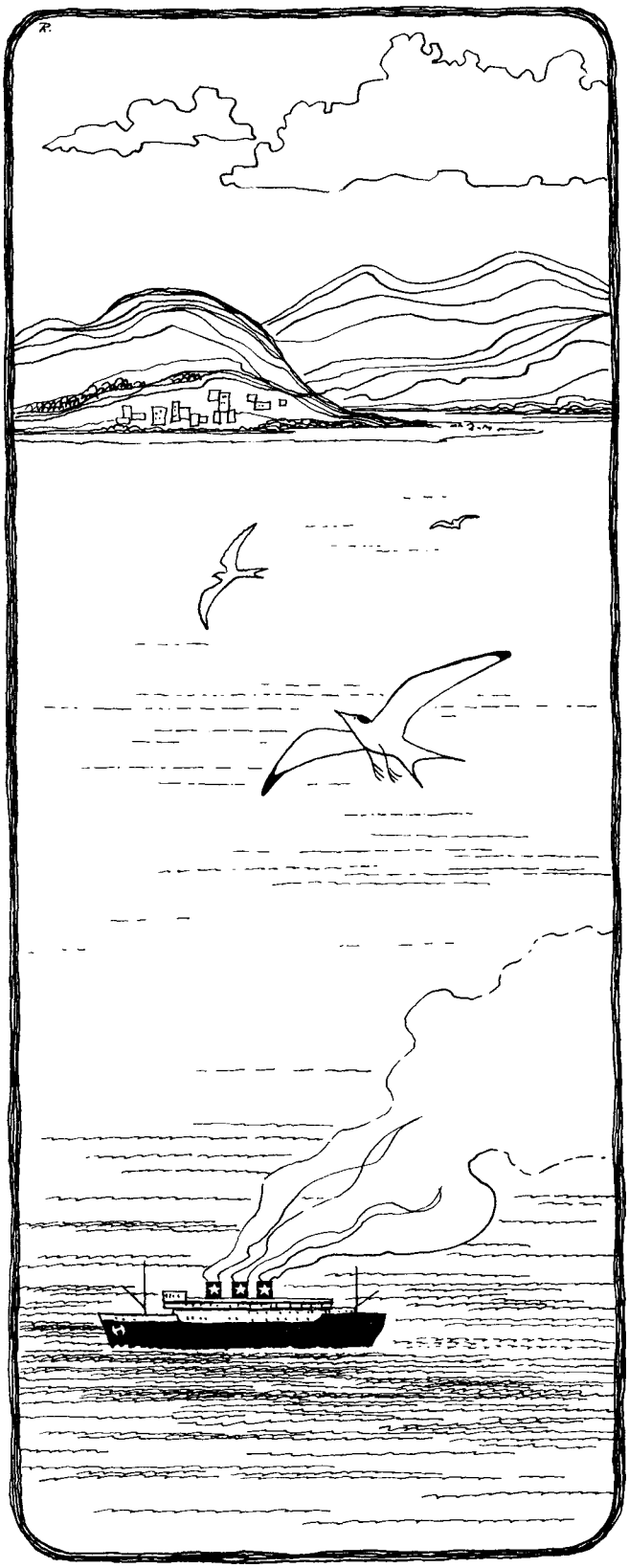

THE FIRST CLASS PASSENGERS aboard the Portuguese liner *Marracuene* were as usual mostly women, wives of Moçambique colonial civil servants returning after a shopping tour, or a visit to relatives in the Capital, Lourenço Marques. There were also a couple of single girls out from Lisbon, in search of better paid secretarial jobs, a couple of middle-aged South African women who were doing the round trip "just for fun," and who frankly adored anything Portuguese from the boiled cod-fish served for breakfast (fascinating) to the ingenious way one summoned the waiters with a sibilant and satisfying *pssst*. There were five men on board, and only one attached to a wife, so the tendency to segregate the sexes was even more apparent than is usual on a Portuguese ship.

Maria da Conceiçao

was easily the most interesting of the women passengers. The wife of an administrator of one of the richest provinces of Moçambique, she dominated by sheer force of energy. There was something in her walk, something about her ready speech, something about her laughter which radiated strength and security. Her beautifully rounded hips seemed propelled by more than an inexhaustible supply of vigour. Nothing could be arid where Maria da Conceiçao dwelt. Her humour welled abundantly at meal times and irrigated the driest personality. She did not make friends. Everyone was her friend. The other women were polite to each other and eked out a minimum of charm as they pretended to admire each other's children with small, perfunctory caresses. But not so Maria da Conceiçao. Maria would swing the little ones up into her generous arms and trumpet noisily into their necks, an endearment which sent them all into squeals of delight.

As one of the youngest wives aboard I felt rather unsure of myself. I had no inclination to play canasta or discuss tropical diseases and the peccadillos of native servants, so there seemed

By Marguerite Lidchi

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nothing left for me to do except to go straight to my cabin after dinner on the first night.

I hesitated at the entrance to the lounge as I felt the roll of the ship. I noticed that Maria da Conceiçao had gathered all the women around her in a tight group. Herself, she was nonchalantly embroidering a tremendous cloth which rippled over her lap and down to her feet. I was about to move towards the deck when she looked up and flashed one of her generous smiles. There was a hint of gold-filling in one corner of her mouth, I noticed, and it seemed to tender a separate, gleaming invitation of its own. From the way the men tried not to glance at her from their own corner of the lounge, it was easy to see that every square inch of her broad, well-shaped arms and smiling face held some sort of promise for them. I smiled back and then found myself joining her circle. Already I thought of it as hers. She presided over the tangle of introductions. I shook the hands of the nearest women, included the rest in a gesture, and sat down in the chair indicated by Maria's needle which incidentally was to conduct the rest of that entertaining evening for us women.

"We were talking of the Metropole," this was by way of explanation to me. Her voice was husky, probably from too much cigarette-smoking, but it had a deep and fascinating timbre. It certainly reached the men, for their faces were tightly strained to avoid open smiles.

"You know in Lisbon," she was saying, smoothing the cloth, "I'd walk down the street, tik-tik-tik-tik, just like that." The two middle fingers of either hand jabbed the air rapidly to illustrate the motion of staccato walking in high heels, and from the motion I actually saw her engaged in that quick trot.

"Of course," she smiled coyly, "I was very young then; very young and lovely, lovely, lovely. My hair was long, of course, and loose." The embroidery needle brushed her shoulder. "It was fairer, much fairer, then, quite natural." She gazed reminiscently ahead. "I used to touch it up with a rinse." There was a tiny gurgle. "Nobody ever guessed."

The needle was plied industriously.

"I wore a tight little blouse with tucks, tiny, tiny, tiny." She screwed up her eyes and the needle flew through the air leaving a cloud of invisible tucks behind it. "Of course I was slimmer in those days, not too slim," and she closed both eyes for an instant and pursed her mouth. This evoked an expression far more suggestive than any wink I have ever seen.

THERE WAS A LOT MORE in the same vein. She wore a tight little skirt that nipped her waist, and the seams of her stockings were straight, straight, straight. And of course her legs were a lot better too, when she was younger. "You don't see legs like them today." Everybody looked down to where the cloth hid her legs like a stage curtain. She drew it aside dramatically to reveal the shapely limbs.

"Like bait for the fish," and she bunched up the fingers of her left hand to show how the men would flock. "And oh! the remarks!" She pulled her mouth down and her face suddenly became leery and mannish. "I guess that's my meat," says one. Maria da Conceiçao's eyebrows lifted in indignation. "That's not meat. Don't you know lobster when you see it?"

The silent little sallow woman sitting next to me was in shrieks of laughter, and there was a look of delight on the faces of the South Africans, as though they had just partaken in an unforgettable experience.

"Portuguese men want to kiss me too much," Maria explained for their benefit in appalling English. They again dissolved into sputters of laughter. And Maria sat there surrounded by mirth, stitching rapidly.

I recalled seeing her come on board earlier that afternoon with a canary in a cage in one hand, and two small cases and a handbag in the other, an overnight bag slung negligently over her shoulder. She was followed up the gangplank by a native girl of twelve or so, in a little white apron and cap, who also was laden with parcels. It must always have been like this. Things and people gravitated naturally towards Maria da Conceiçao. I imagined the natives queueing up outside her husband's house with offerings of eggs and chickens. I could see the dozen servants running around with notes and presents to the neighbours, coming back with

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more notes, more presents. Best of all I could see her entertaining the ladies to tea, with all the usual largesse of the colonial Portuguese tea-table and more.

Before we broke up that night Maria da Conceiçao ordered tea and nothing would satisfy her but to pour out for everybody. She ate cakes liberally with handsome plump white hands, and brushed the crumbs from her throat with the same jewelled fingers. When she got up, I found myself rising with all the other ladies, as though she were royalty. Some thanked her. I shook her hand.

Her exit was accompanied by an affable, all-encompassing smile at the men and the waiters. She passed under the huge map marked out with the navigators' routes, and turned down the stairs out of sight. There was a short interval of silence before comments were loosed. It was thought by most that she was good company, amusing, but others though amused were dubious about her good taste.

THE NEXT MORNING my stewardess brought breakfast to my cabin and showed me an apparently new wool jersey dress that the Senhora of the Administrator had just given her. Yes, I thought, as I sipped the excellent coffee, life must always have treated this jolly woman regally. It was impossible to think of Maria da Conceiçao ending up friendless and moneyless. But then life, as it always does, had struck a good bargain, an almost mephistophelian bargain with her, giving her a nature which must have pledged more than she was ever likely to receive from those around her. I thought of the cautious glances that had been thrown after her by some of the women as soon as she moved away, as though they were afraid of having gone too far by sharing her laughter. Afraid, too, that they might be persuaded through her infectious personality to give away their secrets.

We docked in Beira that day, and most of us went into town. When we sailed again in the evening we had several new passengers on board. Among them was Mrs. Tavares, a good-looking, olive-skinned Portuguese woman, and her husband.

Perhaps it was the fact that she drifted sinuously from her husband's card-playing group back to us, again and again, that lent her a nomadic glamour. Certainly it drew a little of our attention from Maria da Conceiçao.

Each one of us had bought something or other in Beira even if it was only, as in my case, a toothbrush and a pair of sunglasses, so it was easy for Maria da Conceiçao to weave the conversation from the silk she had bought at the Indian shop today, through the material department of a big Lisbon store, out into the sunlit Avenida down which she would walk, tik-tik-tik-tik, to do her shopping almost every day.

What happened to Maria when she sallied forth on her shopping expeditions we did not learn just then because, while the administrator's wife paused a few seconds to suck her embroidery cotton preliminary to threading it through the needle, Mrs. Tavares took the opportunity of stating that she never went shopping more than once a month, and then only if it were absolutely necessary. Shopping was so tiring and tiresome, and she much preferred to stay at home housekeeping and looking after the children. As if in competition with Maria da Conceiçao, she bent over her own stitching. She was making a little white organdie bodice for her daughter's first communion, but she never sucked her cotton before threading it.

MARIA SEEMED unconscious of the potential rivalry to her court. She spread out her cloth and surveyed the effect with narrowed eyes. It was a magnificent affair. Garlands and garlands of pink and red carnations intertwining with green and yellow leaves.

"I don't like leaving things to the servants," Mrs. Tavares started on a new tack.

"Neither do I," agreed Maria da Conceicao, pulling a face of horrified agreement. "What I like to do is train them properly, then just keep an eye on them. That way, they please my husband and me, and I am free to do other things."

Mrs. Tavares' smile was superior, as though these things were quite outside her domain.

Maria da Conceiçao continued: "For example, my husband likes to think I prepare a meal for him every now and then, so I tell my cook what

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to make. Before my husband comes home I put on a little check apron," the cloth fell to the floor, and we were shown how the bow of the apron was tied. "I make my hair untidy," the blonde head was shaken from side to side and plump hands ruffled it, "then, when I hear my Victorinho coming home . . ."

"Is that the cook?" interrupted Mrs. Tavares.

"No. My husband's name is Victor. I must tell him that," and the jolly woman broke into snorts of delight at the thought of sharing this joke with her husband. "As I was saying, when I hear my Victorinho coming in, I emerge from the kitchen with a frying pan in my hand, always a frying pan —a pot is not half so effective and makes me feel as if I'm really cheating—and, of course, I am singing a little song." The full red lips pursed up to whistle a few bars of *Funiculífuniculá*.

As she sat there in the comfortable arm chair with a couple of locks falling in housewiferly disarray over her forehead, she looked arch yet so distracted and kitchen-harassed, that Mrs. Tavares did not stand a chance. All the women were beginning to think with guilty pleasure of the little ways in which they, too, had cheated their menfolk. They giggled conspiratorially.

"Really, he eats with so much pleasure that I feel it's worth the trouble to put up a little performance." Some one had been translating for the benefit of the South African ladies.

"Pinch me Gladys, or I'll die laughing," gasped one of them. "What a character!"

"A real card."

The Portuguese ladies giggled, and the cheeks of my sallow neighbour became almost rosy as she explained how she had once bluffed her husband that her dresses cost three times their real price when she wanted him to like one.

Mrs. Tavares had lost the first round. Nobody really noticed when she got up and went to sit beside her husband at the card table.

BUT THE NEXT DAY after tea, Mrs. Tavares got in first. Maria da Conceicao had had a good long nap and was taking her time about tea and cakes down in the dining room, while upstairs in the lounge Mrs. Tavares was elegantly occupying the chair which had for the past two nights been filled with the more Junoesque proportions of the administrator's lady.

It was a cold, miserable day, so that by the time Maria came up from the dining room it was not surprising that conversation had rapidly progressed from the inadvisability of dressing too lightly in bad weather to the perils of neglecting seemingly minor ailments. What with malaria, dysentery and all sorts of fevers being so prevalent in the colonial areas, every woman had at least one major near-death experience to relate. Mrs. Tavares expertly took the conversation to a point where it would have to balance until every one had had her say.

The Lisbon typist had just managed to squeeze in a rapid account of how a whitlow of which she had taken no notice had to be urgently operated. "The doctor said that if I'd waited another few hours, they might have had to amputate. Another few hours. I mean, it just shows you."

Mrs. Tavares, who had during the scrappy recital been waiting with poised needle, pounced.

"A pimple. A simple pimple." She rubbed the side of her nose thoughtfully. "One morning my husband wakes up with a slight uncomfortable feeling here on the side of his nose." With the adoption of the historic present tense her voice became intolerably casual. " 'What's the matter?' I ask, 'Nothing,' says he.' " Here, she shrugged her shoulders. "Who's going to give it another thought?" She put in a couple of stitches. "He comes home for his lunch as usual, and says to me, 'You know this thing in my nose is a nuisance,' and right through lunch he's sort of feeling it with his finger and he hardly eats any tuna fish salad, which is always his favourite." There was a switch of tense for commentary. "When I saw this I thought, 'Oh, oh! When you don't eat your tuna fish salad, my boy, there's trouble brewing.' Of course he refused to see the doctor. Anyway, that night he comes home with a splitting headache. The doctor examines him. By this time the infection has already spread right up," she pointed significantly to her forehead. "Penicillin, aureomycin . . . I don't know what other mycin." Her voice fell dramatically. "The point is, that by then the infection had spread to such an extent that the doctor . . ." She pulled a non-committal

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face and held the palm of her hand flat up and out above her shoulder and away from her. "Well, I thought it was the end. He was delirious for a whole day. In fact, I was so convinced he was going to die that I went up to my room to pray, and do you know, I promised God that if He would only let my husband get better I would give away every one of my jewels and most to the church."

THIS SURPRISING NEW SLANT to the conversation evoked a crop of frowns of interest and appreciation. It was as though Mr. Tavares was still hanging between life and death instead of sitting in the same room, at the other end, calmly playing cards. We all hung on as though only Mrs. Tavares' favourable ending could release him from the peril in which he was encompassed.

By the time Mrs. Tavares had explained which sister had got the rubies, and which one the pearls, and which church the diamonds, I saw the drift of her plan. It was now impossible for Maria da Conceiçao to take up the conversation because it was ten to one that every Portuguese woman had at one time or another made her own private bargain with God, and they would all be alert with readiness to speak.

Whether or not she knew that she had been out-strategied, Maria da Conceiçao listened to the account with great interest, the while fixing Mrs. Tavares with eyes so persistent that they seemed to bore to the source of her very words, and burn right through the rivalry so inherent in the situation.

Her lack of pique worried me. For some reason I did not wish to see her vanquished. But no! She was summoning her forces. She leaned forward suddenly and asked in her rich croak: "Did you feel holy when you were giving all your jewels away?"

Mrs. Tavares looked up warily, expecting a trap. Confronted by nothing more suspicious than the startlingly white channel between the plump woman's breasts, she hesitated.

"Well, I just felt I was fulfilling my promise."

Maria da Conceiçao sat back. It was difficult to say whether the lack of expression on her face was puzzlement or disappointment.

There was a fairly long pause before the next contribution came. Any other story was going to look futile and drab compared with Mrs. Tavares' pearls, rubies and diamonds.

Secure in this knowledge, Mrs. Tavares sat up very straight and gave her entire attention to counting her stitches, while Mrs. Teixeira, a short bespectacled woman who waded right through the menu at every meal, told of how she had vowed to eat nothing but fruit for two weeks if only her son should pass his examination.

To me this seemed meritorious, but I could see that after the sacrifice of gems, calories were right down in the list as far as present company was concerned. There was not even a pause before the second typist from Lisbon spoke up.

Her pact with God was to stop going to the cinema for nine months if her pilot boy friend came back safely from a special jet assignment. The next story was "No new clothes for a year if only a little niece recovered completely from her illness."

AND SO IT WENT ON. Partly from lack of story-telling ability, the offerings seemed to grow more insignificant with each contribution. Their poverty added new lustre to Mrs. Tavares' jewels.

After Mrs. Teixeira's second account of how prayer and an abstention from rice and potatoes defended her husband for a whole year from an attack of malaria, it seemed that there would be no more entries.

The two South African ladies and myself were the only three who had no story to relate. The conversation dwindled.

"Wonderful what prayer can do," someone generalised.

"Yes, it's very strange."

There was nothing more to be said.

Mrs. Tavares came to the end of her row and laying one needle against the other, impaled her ball of wool. She had won this second round. Better make a triumphant exit before Maria da Conceiçao jerked the public, upon whom Tavares still lingered, right out of her reach. Mrs. Tavares was just about to push herself from her chair by the palms of her hands when:

"Once there was an epidemic of 'flu in Pula,"

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began Maria da Conceiçao. "About six years ago. All the children were getting it pretty badly. What with anti-malaria pills they were taking, and the heat, this flu left them looking pretty much like twigs, poor little souls."

It was not until this point in Maria's monologue that I, for one, realised that perhaps she was reversing the subject of making a pact with God.

"One little baby of three months old died, probably as a result of that. I don't know. But my little girl was about seven years old then, and I must have got into a panic about her because she wasn't very strong. I decided to ask God to spare her from catching the germ, and if He did, I would do penance by taking a walk from Pula to the nearest 'posto' which was quite a few kilometres away."

I COULD SEE from the universal look of polite and somewhat puzzled interest that I was the only one to know the distance from Pula to the nearest posto. It was at least sixty kilometres by road. But the puzzlement I shared with the others. There was an extravagance about Maria da Conceiçao that was out of all keeping with bargain hunting with the Almighty, even though sixty kilometres in a climate that was hot and humid all year 'round was a generous offer.

Maria lifted her eyebrows in doubt and heaved a sigh as she resumed.

"Then I thought that if God wanted me to walk that distance that I would probably get stuck on the road in any case, and probably I would not get anything in exchange . . . besides blisters perhaps."

Mrs. Tavares was tapping her needles against her wrist. The narrator was not getting half as much identifying approval as she had received, but this switch had more than captured our attention. This story had the great value of being told by someone who, to us and in the present context, had the tinge of the sinner. The reformed sinner had the dramatic advantage that a conversion always has over continued faith.

The sinner put her hands over her ample breasts. "When I set out. . . ." This time it was not tik-tik-tik-tik. "It was too hot, but I walked and walked without feeling anything."

Once again, one could imagine her striding along the dusty road, this time, no-one behind her except perhaps a piccanin, or a black woman with a clay pot on her head going in search of water. I had never heard of a woman walking more than a few steps in that part of the country.

Maria da Conceiçao sighed.

"I hardly remember anything until I got there. Ribeira, he was chef de Posto, then got out of his car and took off his helmet to scratch his head when I told him I'd come for a walk."

She put her plump hand to her cheek half hiding her shining eyes from us. We knew there was nothing more to come. But we waited, reading her exaltation with feeble braille movements of her heart.

There was a tiny impatient clink of knitting needles! Mrs. Tavares. Somebody else sighed. Tavares must have been ready to get up for some time. She was already two paces away. "I'll go and see what my husband is doing."

We all watched her sail into her little marital harbour and one of the South African women whispered, "How very extraordinary." I never found out whether she was referring to the Tavares exit or the long pilgrimage with nothing at the end of the road.

We were all sitting in silence and the discomfort engendered by a loss of dignity. Perhaps the skirmish had not been quite worth while. And we, who had invested our emotions on a side that had neither won nor lost, felt a vacuum. The South African women proceeded to fill it. "Who's for Canasta?"

"I've got to wash my hair."

"Back again?" Mrs. Tavares had been unable to stay away.

I looked up to find her plumping the cushion of the chair which she had occupied. "I've lost one of my needles," she said with an air of distraction slightly over and above what the situation required. We were all shuffling our feet and looking under the table when Tavares spoke again. "But did your child recover fully?"

Maria da Conceiçao stopped searching around her ankles and looked up in surprise. "No." She tossed a lock of hair back. "No she didn't. She died."

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The Mystery of the BLUE CARDS

(an exchange of letters)

October 19, 1962

The Editors
RAMPARTS

Dear Sirs:

In your September issue of RAMPARTS, Mr. Neville Braybrooke's essay on Ronald Firbank is extremely regrettable because of its numerous misstatements and distortions.

Mr. Braybrooke carelessly asserts that it had been Firbank's "custom to write his sketches and stories on large blue postcards, and, since his handwriting sprawled so, often he could squeeze no more than ten words to a side." This is a gross illustration of confusing Firbank's works with his legend. Not only is there no reliable evidence to show that these alleged "large blue postcards" ever existed, but there is much evidence to show that Firbank wrote the drafts of his novels on ordinary sheets of paper in rather commonplace exercise books. Firbanks' handwriting was firm and clear. His words slanted to fit the ends of the lines in his notebooks, and he could be extremely economical in his use of space. Had Mr. Braybrooke examined any of Firbank's manuscripts or notebooks, he would have known about these matters. Most of Ronald Firbank's letters, manuscripts, and notebooks were in London and available for an interested critic's perusal before Sotheby's sale of Firbank materials on 12 December 1961. Sotheby & Co. catalogued hundreds of items for this sale—but not one blue postcard was to be found among these items. Mr. Braybrooke borrows his information about these cards from Osbert Sitwell's unfortunate essay on Firbank which is anecdotal, not factual.

When discussing Firbank's 1916 reprint of *Odette d'Antrevernes*, Mr. Braybrooke curiously declares that "*A Study in Temperament* was dropped (and has subsequently never been reprinted) . . . ." *A Study in Temperament* was reprinted last July in Duckworth's *The New Rythum and Other Pieces*. Duckworth advertised months before July, however, that *A Study in Temperament* was to be included in their new book.

Mr. Braybrooke strangely asseverates that Firbank's "*Odette d'Antrevernes* had been followed by his play, *The Mauve Tower*, the unprinted typescript of which is now to be found in the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library." The typescript of *The Mauve Tower* carries the date 1904. Firbank, in a letter to Carl Van Vechten dated from London, 22 June 1925, specifically listed *The Mauve Tower* as having been written in 1900. In no case, therefore, was this play written after *Odette d'Antrevernes*, which was drafted in 1904 and first published in 1905.

The above-mentioned Firbank letter to Van Vechten is a part of the Berg Collection at the New York Public Library. *The Mauve Tower* is not. Before writing this letter, I had a talk with Dr. John D. Gordon, the curator of the Berg Collection. Dr. Gordon informed me that *The Mauve Tower* never was and is not now a part of the Berg Collection. At Sotheby's auction of 12 December 1961, when the typescript of *The Mauve Tower* was sold, Dr. Gordon did not even make a bid for the piece. Dr. Gordon also has no record of any correspondence with Mr. Braybrooke about matters pertaining to Ronald Firbank. It is clearly evident, therefore, that Mr.

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Braybrooke never contacted the Berg Collection, and it is only logical to infer that his reference to it is the worst possible kind of scholarly faking.

In a footnote which is supposed to imply erudition, Mr. Braybrooke states that "In England and America today *Sorrow in Sunlight* is reprinted under the title of *Prancing Nigger*." For once he is right. When, however, he avers that "Firbank himself always regretted having permitted the other title *(Prancing Nigger)* to be used," Mr. Braybrooke is indulging in twaddle of the most remarkable kind. In his next equally learned footnote, Mr. Braybrooke refers to Dr. Miriam J. Benkovitz's article, "Ronald Firbank in New York." Although he found this article "interesting" (as he says), it is doubtful if Mr. Braybrooke read all of it. Dr. Benkovitz, when discussing *Sorrow in Sunlight*, says that after "Brentano's had accepted the book for publication, Van Vechten had changed its name to 'Prancing Nigger' *with the author's enthusiastic endorsement*" (my italics). Firbank, himself, in a letter to Van Vechten dated from Rome, 17 November 1923, indicated that he found the title *Prancing Nigger* "delicious." The letter is in the Berg Collection awaiting the perusal of Mr. Braybrooke.

The statement that Firbank was first buried in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome where the remains of Keats and Shelley repose is correct. When Firbank was later exhumed and reburied at his sister's behest, however, he was not "reinterred in the Catholic Cemetery in San Lorenzo," as Mr. Braybrooke thinks, but in the Catholic Cemetery at Verano.

Mr. Braybrooke is under the grotesque misconception that "*Valmouth*, borrowing Cardinal Pirelli for its last act, was turned into a successful musical in London and New York." According to the British reviews which I read in connection with Sandy Wilson's musical, it was very far from an unqualified critical success in London, when, nevertheless, *Valmouth* was performed in New York in October 1960, it was a dismal critical and commercial failure—perhaps the worst fiasco of the season. The New York critics, without exception, considered it tasteless and dull. *Valmouth* closed in less than one week!

I have exposed only a few of Mr. Braybrooke's gaucheries, but these may be taken to represent a very adequate index to the reliability of everything he says in his essay on Firbank. As far as Mr. Braybrooke's "ideas" are concerned, I could not see that he had any. Most of his "thoughts" are freely borrowed from Jocelyn Brooke and Sir Coleridge Kennard without, of course, proper tasteful acknowledgement of the sources.

In his second paragraph, Mr. Braybrooke accuses Firbank of occasional "Bad Taste," making this point early in his essay "as an antidote to some of the wild untutored eulogies which have recently met the issue of the first complete edition of his works." Mr. Braybrooke then hears Firbank's voice "from the Milky Way: 'How I hate the untutored. They are *so* naked.' " It is a pity that Mr. Braybrooke does not share Firbank's hatred for the untutored. I hope that when he writes his critical biography of Firbank he will show some mildly tutored respect for the available evidence on his subject.

My remarks here rely on facts which I feel compelled to state. I am writing a critical study of Firbank's novels under a President's fellowship at Columbia University. I have examined all the Firbankiana which have, in any way, been made available. These include the literary manuscripts and typescripts, the letters, notebooks, and miscellanea.

As a responsibility to your readers, the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, and Ronald Firbank, I feel that you should print these facts.

Edward M. Potoker, M.A.
New York 24, New York

November 26, 1962

The Editors
RAMPARTS

Dear Sirs:

In May, 1961, I gave a lecture on Ronald Firbank, sponsored by *The Aylesford Review*. In the chair was Mr. Ifan Kyrle Fletcher, and at the

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end of the meeting I met a number of Firbank enthusiasts, several of whom had known him during his life-time. Some months later I made an article out of these lecture "notes" and submitted it to RAMPARTS in the early part of 1962. (Between its submission and appearance in September, I was sent no proofs.) Prior to this, another copy of my typescript had been seen and retained by an American University press which, on the strength of this sample, commissioned me to write a short book about Firbank for a series that they had just launched about "Twentieth Century Writers." This, then, is the background. Now to the points, paragraph by paragraph, which Mr. Potoker raises.

The blue post-cards. Mr. Potoker believes that these are "a legend." Sir Osbert Sitwell assures me that they are not: "They are at Renishaw" (14th November, 1962). Sir Osbert also adds: "My essay on Firbank was as I wanted it to be, and perhaps Mr. E. M. Potoker would mind his own business."

A Study in Temperament. This had not been reprinted at the time when I submitted my article. But this fact apart, it makes no difference to my argument which concerns primarily Firbank's reasons for dropping it when he reprinted *Odette d'Antrevernes* as *Odette* in 1916. Originally, *A Study in Temperament* and *Odette d'Antrevernes* had appeared under one cover in 1905.

The Mauve Tower. The typescript of this play and of *Odette d'Antrevernes* both carry the date 1904 on them. I had not seen the letter to Carl Van Vechten of 1925, in which the play is listed as having been written in 1900 and accept Mr. Potoker's correction on this point. In early 1962 I was told by a London bookseller that the typescript of the play had been sold to a New York Library and assumed this to be the New York Public Library in view of the Berg Collection of Firbank there. I learned later from another bookseller (and would have corrected this had I seen proofs) that the library was in fact the University of Rochester Library, New York.

Sorrow in Sunlight, or Prancing Nigger. I had the pleasure of meeting Miss Miriam J. Benkovitz when she was in London in 1961 and of discussing with her this particular change of title. My own view is that Firbank always preferred the first title (which was the title of his first choosing, after all), and that it was only because he did not wish to kick a gift-horse in the mouth that he accepted Van Vechten's alternative. In London, Heinemann's had already turned the book down under the first title and, in order to get it out in America, he let the change be made. In similar circumstances, other English authors have behaved in the same way. But amongst his friends—the Sitwells, for instance—it has been maintained that he constantly regretted the change. Nor is it hard to understand his regret at the loss of so beautiful and so telling a title.

His burial. I stand corrected that it was at the Cemetery at Verano, not San Lorenzo, in which he was reburied at his sister's behest.

Valmouth. This was turned into a musical play by Sandy Wilson and first presented in London at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith. If plays are successful there, they are transferred to the West End. *Valmouth* was. I stand corrected about its New York run, although I find that it did not close "in less than one week." It opened on October 6th and played until the end of the following week. Normally, I would not bother with this kind of pedantry, but obviously it is the kind of thing that Mr. Potoker enjoys.

I first met Jocelyn Brooke as a result of publishing some of his poems during the war. At subsequent meetings we have discussed Firbank. The only writing by Sir Coleridge Kennard that I have read (and indeed know of) is his four-page preface to *The Artificial Princess.*

It is not for me to judge my own work. Mr. Potoker has given his verdict—and now it is for other readers to give theirs.

Meanwhile, I shall look forward to Mr. Potoker's promised study of Firbank with much interest.

Neville Braybrooke
London, N.W. 3, England

Editorial Note: Dr. Miriam J. Benkovitz, in her definitive Firbank Chronology (page 356 of the New Directions Paperbook edition of Firbank), states that Firbank's place of burial is "San Lorenzo." That is, she agrees with Mr. Braybrooke.

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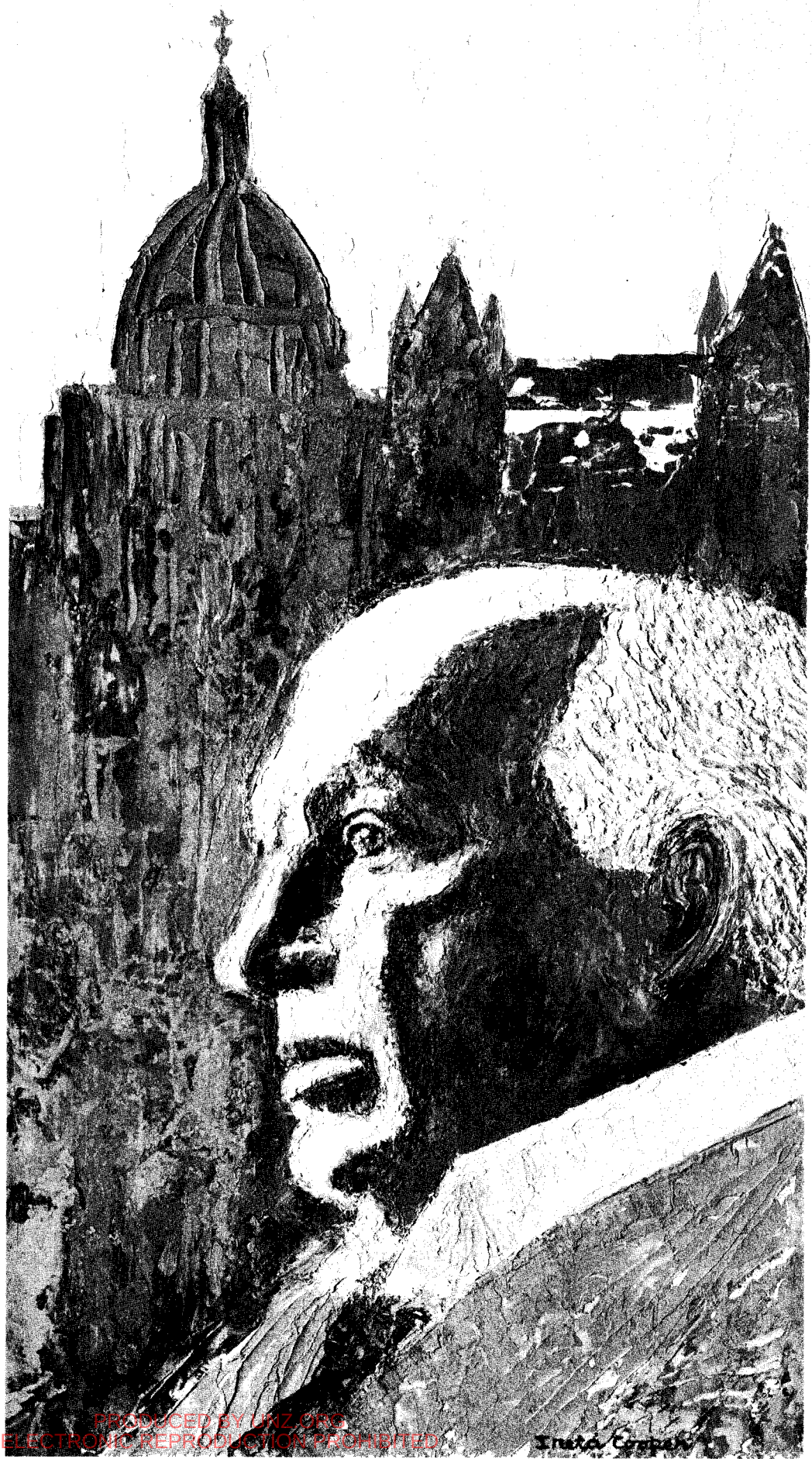

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Maxwell Geismar

Henry James:

the Psychology of the Key Hole

THE SACRED FOUNT, in 1901, was perhaps the most perplexing, enigmatic story that Henry James ever wrote. By comparison, *The Turn of the Screw* is child's play in mystification. It was also one of James' most unpopular books (little wonder in terms of a commercial audience), and it is still the only work in The Canon about which a real—rather than a nominal—difference of critical opinion exists.

The *nouvelle* derived from Stopford Brooke's anecdote (James was careful to note the social personages who were his literary sources) about the marriage of a young man to an older woman, which had the effect of reviving the older woman's youth, and of causing the young husband to appear much older. "Don't lose sight of the little *concetto*," James reminded himself, "that begins with the fancy of the young man who marries an old woman. . . . Keep my play on idea: the *liaison* that betrays itself by the *transfer* of qualities . . . from one to the other of the parties to it. They *exchange*. I see 2 couples. One is married—this is the *old-young* pair. I watch *their* process, and it gives me my light for the spectacle of the other (covert, obscure, unavowed) pair who are *not* married." But *The Sacred Fount* was in fact more complex, baroque and revealing than the bare outline of the plot suggested.

The story was set in one of the oddest of all the odd English house parties in the Jamesian fiction, and possibly in the annals of literature. This was the dream-world atmosphere of a house party with no hosts to speak of, with invisible servants (as in "The Great Good Place"), with those empty rooms occupied only by the strolling, whispering, gossiping couples who are engaged in their mysterious *tête-à-têtes* at midnight—couples who shift, change, vanish, reappear just as in a nightmare sequence. Who are they? What are they doing? What *are they* talking about? Beneath their fashionable chatter, what are their innermost, secret and "intimate" relations? That is

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the mystery to be divined by the Jamesian "observer-narrator" in *The Sacred Fount*, whose curiosity has reached the point of real obsession, mania, and a limitless passion for "speculation" in the sexual area. The elderly Grace Brissenden has become positively young and beautiful; while poor Briss himself has aged immeasurably. (Of all the hypothoses raised about this young-old couple in the story, the obvious one that Mrs. Briss may have been revived by love—either of her husband or of another—or that Mr. Briss may simply be sick, or dying, or, say, destroyed by jealousy of his wife; this idea is never entertained either by James or his "analytical" spokesman.) While, to balance the equation, there is the case of the inarticulate Gilbert Long who has suddenly become a supreme "conversationalist," and a remarkable "critic." Which woman then, of all the guests and couples at Newmarch, has nourished *his* conversational gift at the expense of her own wit, just as Mrs. Briss has regained her physical vitality at the cost of poor Briss's dwindling life-span?

That is the very odd plot of *The Sacred Fount*, in essence. That is the "secret" which the Jamesian voyeuristic spectator sets out to discover through his characteristically oblique method of questioning all the major and minor participants in the drama. Of questioning—and then evading and blocking the questions which are in turn put to him; for along the way, he has picked up both Mrs. Briss, full of malicious gossip and scandal, as a fellow-snooper, and the painter Ford Obert as a fellow-hypothesizer. They are assistant observers, as it were, who must however be put off the trail when they come near the "truth." Also, are Obert and Mrs. Server "making love, possibly"? And how does this affect Obert's view of Mrs. Server as the source of Gilbert Long's eloquence? And—"for Long to have been so stamped, as I found him, how the pliant wax must have been prepared, the seal of passion applied"! Of course, these things, the Jamesian narrator admits in a rare moment of humility—"the way other people could feel about each other, the power not in one's self, in the given instance, that made for passion—were of course at best the mystery of mysteries; still, there were cases in which fancy, sounding the depths or shallows, could at least drop the lead."

And his fancy runs wild. All the Jamesian characters in *The Sacred Fount* trade observations about what—except for the refinement of the Jamesian vocabulary—would be a sexual sewer. The word "intimate" is recurrent throughout the narrative; and what awful, delightful, mysterious and terrifying visions does it not conjure up to the remorseless searcher after sexual secrets who is the novel's hero—this prurient gossiper! For, at whose sacred fount are all these British society men, and all these handsome, sophisticated, corrupt British ladies, *not* drinking? The Jamesian language is highly interesting, of course, laden as it is with infantile fantasies, and with a predominantly feminine imagery. But an even more fantastical orbit of adult love is conveyed by *The Sacred Fount*.

It is a world of liaisons gone mad in this late-Jamesian, repressed, spinsterish, prodigious world of sexual fantasies. But these liaisons and secret affairs are "experienced" only in talk, in gossip and in speculation. There is nothing direct, nothing physical ever described here, or experienced first-hand by the spying, curious, fertile mind of the observer-hero. Just so, there are no pleasures of the flesh, or of sexual love, no rewards, no satisfactions ever described beyond those of an increased mental cleverness on the part of Gilbert Long, a renewed physical vitality on the part of Mrs. Briss, at the expense of her suffering and devitalized sexual mate. The myth of Egeria from which the title of *The Sacred Fount* was derived, is that of the vestal virgins who served the gods by anointing their disciples with the holy water. But we know that these religious rites were surely pagan and directly sexual in their content, as offerings to the fertility of nature itself. In James's view the Fount contributes at best to verbal eloquence, at the minimum to social grace. This is a world not indeed of passion, but of sexual manipulation—of human passion being *used* for the leisure-class graces and virtues which Henry James considered essential. And this manipulation goes on mainly in the mind of a hero who apparently sees no other values in

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sexual love, and no harm done by a continuous shifting (in his own fancy) of the human lovers.

"But I maintain, none the less, that so far as they *can* go, they do go," says the Observer to Mrs. Briss about Gilbert Long and his mysterious lady. "It's a relation, and they work the relation." But what *is* the relation, and how does it work? It is the relation, "exquisite surely, of knowing they help each other to shine." And "to shine" is to shine socially, in the art of conversation. If sexual love is viewed here as the sacred fount of true personality, if it is used as a kind of hidden natural resource, a secret deposit of shining golden ore, there is after all nothing "vulgar" in the use to which it is being put, just as there is, at base, nothing sexual in this love. But what of the opposite side of this curious concept: the price which is being paid by the victims of such passion? Was *The Sacred Fount* a pure conceit, as James implied, or did he really believe that in any human relation—or sexual relation—one partner had to pay, one partner had to sacrifice his deepest vitality, one partner had to lose all, in order for the other partner to bloom, to thrive, even to "shine." What a rigid and fearful base for all these curiously shifting and non-sexual sexual love affairs! Wasn't it conceivable to the curious, fanciful and analytic Jamesian mind that through the process of both lovers giving themselves wholly and completely to their passion, without stint and without ego, each might be mutually nourished and enhanced? Or that even, in the normal course of human passion, the price of love had something to do with the pleasure of love?

In real life, of course, lovers do destroy one another, but this was far, far away from the prevailing Jamesian concept in *The Sacred Fount*. For the underlying concept in the narrative is based on a standard infantile fantasy—well documented by the contemporary Freudians—of the child "eating" the mother who is nursing him, and hence also possessed by the equivalent fear of being "eaten up." We see almost the same precise psychological pattern in the phobias of Swift and Lewis Carroll—not to mention Jack London's deep oral complex in which the Darwinian law of survival became simply a matter of the gastric juices. In Henry James's own life, the fear of love, and particularly of sexual love, precluded any chance of the artist himself being involved in a serious human relation; and this contributed in turn to the devouring Jamesian Ego: self-enclosed, all-sufficient, isolated, and *ignorant* about the true bases of human life and human experience. But the present Jamesian voyeur-hero has, all the same, made a momentous step forward. It is his own mind which has created all these exotic love affairs; it is his own mind (or fancy) which now invents and *controls* these love affairs—and which, ignorant as he admits it to be, is in the end far superior to love. It is the Jamesian Ego itself, in short, cut-off and constricted from all normal relationships, which, surrounded by this chain of unfortunate "lovers," yet emerges as dominant and triumphant in *The Sacred Fount*.

Or almost so. The germ of sexual curiosity is very catching, and now we have a series of "multiple observers" (which James had suggested earlier in "The Private Life"), each with his or her own theory, whom the obsessed advocate of "pure reason" also has to control or manipulate. It turns out that May Server must be the logical victim of Gilbert Long's rise to conversational brilliance. She is the true Fount of his suddenly-acquired critical acumen and eloquence. She is on the edge of hysteria and collapse, and she has completely lost her own conversational gifts. Is the omnipotent analyst of *The Sacred Fount* absolutely positive about this? He admits again his own ignorance about the facts of love. "It would have been almost as embarrassing to have to tell them how little experience I had had in fact as to have had to tell them how much I had had in fancy . . ." Yet there is Long, "the transfigured talker," and there is Mrs. Server, flitting, distraught and mum. The novel's hero puts on a bold front, even while he feels a certain condescending sorrow for the victims of his relentless curiosity. When poor Briss raises "his pathetic old face" to inquire: "You 'know'?" the hero responds: "Ah, I know everything!" But this is to a certain degree a paranoid kind of pity, and a false compassion. Briss pleads with him (as he thinks) not to tell. "I felt as if he were now, intellectually speaking, plastic wax in my hand."

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DOES THIS OBSERVER also remind us at times of the hysterical governess in *The Turn of the Screw?* But the governess was a true heroine—made mad by circumstances—while this hero only serves to make everybody else go mad. He is what James was so fond of presenting—"the other side of the case." And now, as he pursues Mrs. Server in order to force a confession out of her, in order to prove to himself "the beauty of having been right," the nightmare atmosphere of *The Sacred Fount* thickens and darkens:

> *"I scarce knew what odd consciousness I had of roaming at close of day in the grounds of some castle of enchantment. I had positively encountered nothing to compare with this since the days of fairy-tales and of the childish imagination of the impossible. Then I used to circle round enchanted castles, for then I moved in a world in which the strange 'came true.' It was the coming true that was the proof of the enchantment . . ."*

And that is to say, the fairy-tale enchantment which had possessed James's own mind from his early youth; which had quickened his first vision of medieval England as the true home for his outcast soul; which had remained as the base and ideological (or emotional) framework for all his literary work, was now being used—"with an evening sky above and great lengthening, arching recesses in which the twilight thickened"—to overpower an innocent soul. "I felt almost as noiseless and guarded as if I were trapping a bird or stalking a fawn."

For May Server is the absolute symbol of the all-sacrificing mother-mistress who has given up her own character and personality for the sake of enhancing her lover's wit, at least. (In Henry James's own life, again, she is based directly on what he believed to be true of his mother, Mrs. Henry James Senior—though obviously this fantasy derived from the jealous and demanding child, and contained homosexual elements.) And yet the omnipotent—mentally—Jamesian hero of *The Sacred Fount* is determined to force Mrs. Server's last secret out of her suffering soul. "She was absolutely on my hands with her secret . . ." And now he perceives incarnate the terrible price of human love. "Beautiful, abysmal, involuntary, her exquisite weakness simply opened up the depths it would have closed . . . It said everything, and by the end of a minute my chatter—none the less out of place for being all audible—was hushed to positive awe by what it had conveyed. I saw as I had never seen before what consuming passion can make of the marked mortal on whom, with fixed beak and claws, it has settled as on a prey." Were there echoes here of the classic French dramatists of passion whom James had read so avidly? Yet there was his own note, added. "She reminded me of a sponge wrung dry and with fine pores agape. Voided and scraped of everything, her shell was merely crushable . . . So it was brought home to me that the victim could be abased, and so it disengaged itself from these things that the abasement could be conscious."

WAS THE WORST PART of human passion the *consciousness* of abasement? This is perhaps the oddest punishment for the strangest human emotions in the history of literature. The Jamesian observer indeed—now turned implacable interrogator—almost ignores Mrs. Server's own plight in his overwhelming compassion for all such victims of love. "Who of us all could say that his fall might not be as deep?—or might not at least become so with equal opportunity. I for a while fairly forgot Mrs. Server, I fear, in the intimacy of this vision of the possibilities of our common nature." Those possibilities of common nature which must at all costs be avoided: "She became such a wasted and dishonoured symbol of them as might have put tears in one's eyes." And wasted and dishonoured, naturally, because in the Jamesian lexicon of love, such a total sacrifice of tragic womanhood implied no possible returns, no satisfactions, no even merely transient rewards of a passion which had simply encompassed and destroyed the whole personality of the lover. Or, on the other hand, implied the bland, self-serving, self-enhancing, purely narcissistic "gifts" of love, which are accompanied, which are covered by the life-blood of the other partner. May Server is "the absolute wreck of her storm, accordingly," a ruined, devitalized, dishonored woman to whose

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passion-wracked frame "the pale ghost of a special sensibility still clung."

And now the Jamesian interrogator-inquisitor, having plumbed the final depths of love, is covered with a kind of terrible guilt, shame and horror—almost as though that prying, peeping child who is at the psychological core of all the morbidly and sexually curious "observers" during this period of the writer's work, had at long last gained entrance to what has been called "the primal scene" of his parents' sexual intercourse. (But why "primal," why even sinful or shameful, except of course in the Victorian framework of western European culture of inhibited sexuality in which James, like Freud, had grown up.) At least this narrator blames himself profusely. "Nothing need have happened if I hadn't been so absurdly, so fatally meditative about poor Long . . ." For now even Gilbert Long, the brilliant critic and conversationalist, the bland recipient of May Server's total passion and total being, is also to be pitied. The victors and victims of love alike are to be mourned, just as the Brissendens are also the tragic results of a common human nature. The narrator sees this clearly—"I had puzzled out everything and put everything together"—even while he staggers under the burden of his knowledge, or his guilt. "Nothing could have been stranger than for *me* so to know it was while the stricken parties themselves were in ignorance."

BUT THIS KIND of "common human nature" is very uncommon—*The Sacred Fount* is indeed a key document to Henry James's very peculiar notions about human relationships and the human psyche. (Edmund Wilson was correct in his intuition about this esoteric document, if he lacked the patience to follow it up.) And, having revealed so much about the central content of his craft, and the peculiar if logical form which his craft followed, it was almost as though the writer hastened to cover up, to mystify and conceal what he had just expressed and exposed. For May Server summons up her last bit of remaining personality to deny flatly the narrator's great "discovery." "What makes you have such a fancy," she asks; while the painter Obert and Mrs. Briss also retreat from their assistant or collaborative roles in his gruesome theories.

The mental manipulation of all these secondary characters by the omnipotent observer—complacent, smug, perhaps mad—is the final twist in *The Sacred Fount*. He becomes the perfect analyst, as it were, who is always right, who always understands the peculiar behavior of the patients who may oppose or flatly deny his speculations: the analyst who can rationalize away any action which contradicts his own "conclusions." That is also the final enigma of the novel. For the terrible, devouring Jamesian desire to "discover," to "understand," or to "see" all these mysterious, evil, fascinating and secret love affairs, is matched by the Jamesian instinct to place screens before his observer's eyes—or not to see.

And this is precisely the underlying psychological meaning of *The Sacred Fount* which the Jacobite critics have consistently avoided through the application of their moralistic or metaphysical theme of "appearance versus reality." (Mr. Leon Edel, who should know better, uses all his own Freudian insight to *justify* Henry James, rather than to understand him.) In the novel itself, "psychologic evidence" is honorable and intelligent according to the Jamesian hero. "What's ignoble is the detective and the key-hole." But wasn't this whole later Jamesian method of psychological observation, and pursuit simply a rarefied and dubious sublimation of the detective and the key-hole? Or a key-hole psychology, so to speak, in which the prurient observer is not only covered with guilt and shame at what he has finally "seen" (what he has always imagined about sexual love), but also becomes the victim of the sexual speculations which he has planted in the minds of all his assistant snoops? The final section of the novel, at least, becomes a kind of mad farce of psychological theory and counter-theory, and finally explodes into nothingness.

WHILE MAY SERVER returns to her normal state, the painter Ford Obert also repudiates his own connection with the narrator. "*Mon siège est fait*," says this hero. "How many panes will you reward me for amiably sitting up with you by smashing?"—"How on earth," says Obert, "can I tell what you're talking about?" How in-

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deed? Has the whole story been a prolonged fantasy on the part of the hero? Or has the weird psychological process of "devouring passion" à la James—of cannibalistic love—begun to reverse itself, perhaps? Or is the narrator's hypothesis *so* accurate that the chief personages in this narrative are withdrawing in order to protect themselves from it? Here begins the final frenzy of the frustrated "psychologist" to flatter, to charm, to force, to coerce, if need be, his assistant observers not to dispute his theory, during the course of which he teases, begs, lies, cajoles, threatens, with every weapon, every wile of his superior intellect. But Obert remains stubborn in his common sense. "Oh, I've watched *you*," says the painter in his turn, in this drama of voyeurism in which everybody has been spying on everybody else. And just at this point "poor Briss" appears to bring the message that Mrs. Brissenden has to speak with the narrator, too. "I trod with him, over the velvet and the marble, through the twists and turns, among the glooms and glimmers and echoes"—of Newmarch, that is. And: "He let me keep his hand while things unspoken and untouched, unspeakable and untouchable . . . were between us again."

There is another fairytale-nightmare episode within the English country-house, the "enchanted castle" with its great corridors, its long series of brilliantly-lighted empty rooms, its complete absence of servants and of guests alike now; but with its wandering spy awaiting his final encounter with the great lady who best represents this dreamlike aristocracy. The narrator leaves Obert with a polite lie, and proceeds to meet his doom. For Mrs. Briss, too, has turned against him; and rejects not only his "theories" but the narrator himself as a suitable member for their select company. The ending of *The Sacred Fount* is overextended, over-written, over-done. As in a play, the two protagonists match wits with each other in a series of long, elaborate, formal set-speeches.

NOW, HOWEVER, THE NARRATOR is a confessed liar, sneak, voyeur and trickster, in the best tradition of the hysterical or possessed Jamesian heroes. He is a trifle "menaced." "Things *had* to hang together . . . and now they don't." Mrs. Briss, moreover, is "under arms" for this final battle. Her beauty, her tone, her authority, all certify her as the legitimate spokesman for her group, her circle, her race. The narrator, uneasily aware of the chinks—"the things I had not thought of"—in his wall of pure reason, his crystal palace of sexual hypotheses—which is about to become a house of cards—is aware of a number of things "that occurred in these stayed seconds of our silence":

> "*But they are to be perhaps best represented by the two most marked intensities of my own sensation: the first the certitude that she had at no moment since her marriage so triumphantly asserted her defeat of time, and the second the conviction that I, losing with her while, as it were, we closed, a certain advantage I should never recover, had at no moment since the day before made so poor a figure on my own ground.*"

Part parody, more than part self-revelation, as *The Sacred Fount* was, James would never carry the decor, so to speak, of the drama of consciousness, beyond this point of "stayed silences" and—in the portentous pause which formed the prelude to the battle of minds—these marked intensities of sensation.

But the narrator, despite his implacable egoism, vanity, and complacency—"If I didn't fear to seem to drivel about my own knowledge, I should say that she had, in addition to all the rest of her 'pull,' the benefit of striking me as worthy of me" —despite all his "me-rooted" logical skill, the narrator has already lost the battle. Mrs. Briss is "in the mystic circle," and even "her looks around" at the empty chambers of this "so intensely nocturnal" palace, are immense. Then at last, so we are told, she charged—"It's nonsense. I've nothing to tell you. I feel there's nothing in it and I've given it up."—"You've made out then who *is*?" the narrator asks eagerly; if, that is, the sacrificial woman is *not* May Server. "Oh, I don't make out, you know," says Mrs. Briss, "so much as you!" But just as in the preliminary interview with Ford Obert, and just like a pleading child who has the gift of a marvellous sophistry, the narrator, even at this point, will not admit the defeat of his obvious superiority of mind; or of the rigid, closed,

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"pure" circle of his intellectual vanity—inviolate indeed; or of the heavy, impassable armor of his ego-bound personality. (He is, to be sure, horrified by the "huge egotism" of Mrs. Brissenden.) There comes to him suddenly the "further hypothesis" that Gilbert Long and Mrs. Briss, the two victors of love, have combined forces to "pretend normalcy," and hence defeat his whole concept (or ideology) of the devouring passions. "I had achieved my flight into luminous ether and, alighting gracefully on my feet, reported myself at my post."

THIS IS SURELY A MAD CLIMAX to a mad novel. But perhaps nowhere else in his fiction had Henry James revealed so clearly, with so much self-insight and wit, the arrogance and the insanity of pure reason itself: the follies and disasters of the intellect which is superior to human experience and outside of it; the abounding faculty (and facility) of both James and his literary spokesmen to rationalize all the traps and debacles of life into a consuming image of self-aggrandisement—to strain all the truth of reality through the screen or the sieve of self-serving intellectual "theory." In part the dubious hero of *The Sacred Fount* comes close to the later Henry James of the *Prefaces*, which are in fact, beneath their assumed esthetic omnipotence, equally apologetic, evasive and misleading; in part this hero is related to the Author of the Jamesian Notebooks, asserting *his* will, talent, achievement against the world's indifferent verdict.

This is the monomania of the intellect. But here it is of no use. Like Obert, Mrs. Briss clings stubbornly to her own conclusions. "I'm afraid I know nothing," she insists, while noting that her interlocutor "abounds in traps." "I stick . . . to my ignorance," she says again, and then even repeats Obert's phrase. "How can I tell, please . . . what you consider you're talking about?" And then: "You talk too much!" she repeats. "You build up houses of cards." And then: "The trouble with you is that you over-estimate the penetration of others . . . How can it approach your own?" She is not without an irony to match the fevered appeals of the narrator.—"I don't at all feel comfortable about your new theory," cries the narrator, to whom even her present lack of theory is a theory, "which puts me so wretchedly in the wrong." "Rather," says Mrs. Briss, almost gaily, "wretchedly indeed in the wrong!" "You flatly contradict me?" he cries. "You deny my miracle?" "I don't believe in miracles," she says. And then he feels some intensification—"not quite, I trust, wanton"—of her suspense. (And how James uses the terminology of the flesh for this purely cerebral exchange. Mrs. Briss has also "panted," not to say "wailed," during this encounter.) And then she gives it to him. "Do you know what I think," says Mrs. Briss. "Well . . . I think you're crazy." "Crazy?" he says. "Crazy."

THERE IS STILL MORE of this in the climactic scene of *The Sacred Fount*, convolution upon convolution, for the narrator is willing to debate even his own lunacy, and wants to know how Mrs. Briss has made up her mind, of a sudden, that she "has been steeped in the last intellectual intimacy with a maniac." He is still convinced that if this aristocratic circle of British lovers is cruel to him, it was he, after all, who has determined their cruelty. And he gives up hard. " 'Remember,' I pleaded, 'that you're costing me a perfect palace of thought!' " But his frail, "but, as I maintain, quite sublime structure" has already crashed on the rocks of Mrs. Briss's indifferent disdain; and her rejection not only of the narrator's "theory," but, along with this, the narrator himself. Finally, "with her negations arrayed and her insolence recaptured," Mrs. Briss has the last word. "My poor dear, you *are* crazy, and I bid you good night!" And then there is the narrator's final confession of defeat, and of flight. "Such a last word—the word that put me altogether nowhere—was too unacceptable not to prescribe afresh that prompt test of escape to other air for which I had earlier in the evening seen so much reason. I *should* certainly never again, on the spot, quite hang together, even though it wasn't really that I hadn't three times her method. What I too fatally lacked was her tone."

Thus the final note of *The Sacred Fount* is the ignominious flight of the "outsider," and one who in his own mind has dominated the charmed set of the British nobility (and evil, incestuous lov-

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ers), but who proves unacceptable to them precisely *because* of a superior intellect which threatens their personal—and social—security. Was there something familiar about all this, as being a recurrent Jamesian notion, cast in a somewhat new light, and with a new and rather unpleasant ending? Yes, it surely was a variation on Henry James's central fantasy of the orphan and outcast child (running from the days of his youth, his exile, and rejection of America, to its full development in such novels as *What Maisie Knew* and *The Awkward Age*). This infantile Jamesian hero, always cut off from the charmed, mysterious, evil circle of "adult intimacy," has simply been transformed into the omnipotent "observer" of *The Sacred Fount* who is nevertheless also rejected by the same glittering British aristocracy which the younger Henry James had claimed as his true ancestral sphere, his personal literary orbit. How many stories and novels had he not based on the theme of the vulgar American outsider who could not enter the "palace" of ancient European culture; while he himself, as the fated chronicler of the international scene, could see both sides, and held all the keys, and was securely perched apart from, or on top of, this odd cultural battle.

WAS IT THIS SAME Anglo-American artist whose most revealing spokesman now confessed his own inability to dominate the charmed society of England even by the utmost power of mind or talent—who was so clearly sent packing by them, who slid down again, so humiliatingly, the slippery moats of these old-world castles of culture? At the end of this story, too, James compared his own protagonist to the same "newspaper-man kicked out" (or to the "damned publishing scoundrel" of *The Aspern Papers*) who had always been held up to such ridicule and contempt in his own previous fiction. Had he not, then, in his own secret heart, also recognized himself, as well as his present spokesman, as hardly more than a superior gossip-columnist—this singularly talented artist!—in the cultivated English aristocracy whose anecdotes he gathered so meticulously for his un-read books, his hissed-at plays? Yes, here as elsewhere in his later work, this was the true fantasy life, the secret nightmare, of Henry James himself, despite all the imposing, ponderous, rotund and formidable literary facade of himself which he erected, and hid behind, during his daylight life.

In this sense *The Sacred Fount* was a kind of parting and farewell to Henry James's earliest, most prevailing and profound and visionary dream of his "English home." If indeed this novel started with the morbid sexual fantasies of an ignorant and outcast child, it ended grimly enough on the ironical note of the mature artist being cast out of British society because of his own superior virtues. But wasn't there also here a kind of Jamesian realization of—and a possible catharsis for—his own deepest illusions, obsessions, or perhaps even psychological hallucinations on both the sexual and the social levels? For in a measure these issues were faced by Henry James in *The Sacred Fount*, if only by the Jamesian "unconscious," concealed by layers of farce and parody, exploding into nonsense. Yes, by virtue of Henry James's slipping down again the slippery walls which surrounded his European castles of fortune, culture and art (or what he called "race")—through being, in short, kicked out of this imaginary Castle itself, he should perhaps have gained a certain kind of perspective and freedom as an artist. And this was to some degree true of the Jamesian fiction in the last big novels of his career (*The Wings of the Dove*, *The Golden Bowl*). I mean that it was true at least whenever he allowed his own inner self, his haunted, terrified, nightmarish visions of life, of failure, of impotence and rejection, to emerge from behind that baroque, massive, portentous, imposing social facade which he had constructed as his official literary personality.

MAXWELL GEISMAR, *one of the leading contemporary literary critics, is best known for his studies of modern American novelists:* Writers In Crisis *(1943);* The Last of the Provincials *(1947);* Rebels and Ancestors *(1953), and* American Moderns *(1957). His essay on* The Sacred Fount *is a chapter from his forthcoming volume on* Henry James and the Jacobites *(September, 1963; Houghton Mifflin.)*

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I. *Dawn. The Hour of Lauds.*

THERE is in all visible things an invisible fecundity, a dimmed light, a meek namelessness, a hidden wholeness. This mysterious Unity and Integrity is Wisdom, the Mother of all, *Natura naturans*. There is in all things an inexhaustible sweetness and purity, a silence that is a fount of action and joy. It rises up in wordless gentleness and flows out to me from the unseen roots of all created being, welcoming me tenderly, saluting me with indescribable humility. This is at once my own being, my own nature, and the Gift of my Creator's Thought and Art within me, speaking as Hagia Sophia, speaking as my sister, Wisdom.

I AM AWAKENED, I am born again at the voice of this my Sister, sent to me from the depths of the divine fecundity.

LET US SUPPOSE I am a man lying asleep in a hospital. (And I tell you the truth, I am indeed this man lying asleep. It is July the second, the Feast of Our Lady's Visitation. A Feast of Wisdom. I am asleep in the hospital.)

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At five thirty in the morning I am dreaming in a very quiet room when a soft voice awakens me from my dream. I am like all mankind awakening from all the dreams that ever were dreamed in all the nights of the world. It is like the One Christ awakening in all the separate selves that ever were separate and isolated and alone in all the lands of the earth. It is like all minds coming back together into awareness from all distractions, cross-purposes and confusions, into unity of love. It is like the first morning of the world (when Adam, at the sweet voice of Wisdom awoke from nonentity and knew her), and like the Last Morning of the world when all the fragments of Adam will return from death at the voice of Hagia Sophia, and will know where they stand.

Such is the awakening of one man, one morning, at the voice of a nurse in the hospital. Awakening out of languor and darkness, out of helplessness, out of sleep, newly confronting reality and finding it to be a gentleness.

It is like being awakened by Eve. It is like being awakened by the Blessed Virgin. It is like coming forth from primordial nothingness and standing in clarity, in Paradise.

In the cool hand of the nurse there is the touch of all life, the touch of Spirit.

Thus Wisdom cries out to all who will hear *(Sapientia clamitat in plateis)* and she cries out particularly to the little, to the ignorant and the helpless.

Who is more little, who is more poor than the helpless man who lies asleep in his bed without awareness and without defence? Who is more trusting than he who trusts himself, and must trust himself each night, to sleep? What is the reward of his trust? Gentleness comes to him when he is most helpless and awakens him, refreshed, beginning to be made whole. Love takes him by the hand, and opens to him the doors of another life, another day.
(But he who has defended himself, fought for himself in sickness, planned for himself, guarded himself, loved himself alone and watched over his own life all night, is killed at last by exhaustion. For him there is no newness. Everything is stale and old.)

When the helpless one awakens strong at the voice of mercy, it is as if Life and Flesh, his Sister, as if the Blessed Virgin (his own flesh, his own sister), as if Nature made wise by God's Art and Incarnation were to stand over him and invite him with unutterable sweetness to be awake and to live. This is what it means to recognize Hagia Sophia.

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II. *Early Morning. The Hour of Prime.*

O BLESSED, silent one, who speaks everywhere! We do not hear the soft voice, the gentle voice, the merciful and feminine.

WE DO NOT HEAR MERCY, or yielding love, or non-resistance, or non-reprisal. In her there are no reasons and no answers. Yet she is the candor of God's light, the expression of His simplicity. We do not hear the uncomplaining pardon that bows down the innocent visages of flowers to the dewy earth. We do not see the Child who is prisoner in all the people, and who says nothing. She smiles, for though they have bound her, she cannot be a prisoner. Not that she is strong, or clever, but simply that she does not understand imprisonment.

THE HELPLESS ONE, abandoned to sweet sleep, him the gentle one will awaken, Sophia.

ALL THAT IS SWEET in her tenderness will speak to him on all sides in everything, without ceasing, and he will never be the same again. He will have awakened not to conquest and dark pleasure but to the impeccable pure simplicity of One consciousness in all and through all: one Wisdom, one Child, one Meaning, one Sister.

THE STARS REJOICE in their setting, and in the rising of the Sun. The heavenly lights rejoice in the going forth of one man to make a new world in the morning, because he has come out of the confused primordial dark night into consciousness. He has expressed the clear silence of Sophia in his own heart. He has become eternal.

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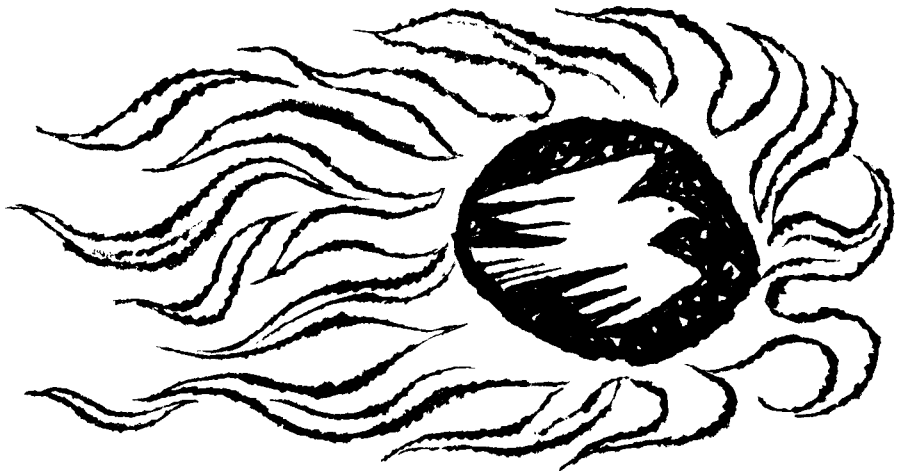

III. *High Morning. The Hour of Tierce.*

THE SUN BURNS IN THE SKY like the Face of God, but we do not know his countenance as terrible. His light is diffused in the air and the light of God is diffused by Hagia Sophia.

WE DO NOT SEE the Blinding One in black emptiness. He speaks to us gently in ten thousand things, in which His light is one fulness and one Wisdom.

THUS HE SHINES not on them but from within them. Such is the loving-kindness of Wisdom.

ALL THE PERFECTIONS of created things are also in God; and therefore He is at once Father and Mother. As Father He stands in solitary might surrounded by darkness. As Mother His shining is diffused, embracing all His creatures with merciful tenderness and light. The Diffuse Shining of God is Hagia Sophia. We call her His "glory." In Sophia His power is experienced only as mercy and as love. (When the recluses of the fourteenth century England heard their Church Bells and looked out upon the wolds and fens under a kind sky, they spoke in their hearts to "Jesus our Mother." It was Sophia that had awakened in their childlike hearts.)

PERHAPS IN A CERTAIN very primitive aspect Sophia is the unknown, the dark, the nameless *Ousia*. Perhaps she is even the Divine Nature, One in Father, Son and Holy Ghost. And perhaps she is in infinite light unmanifest, not even waiting to be known as Light. This I do not know. Out of the silence Light is spoken. We do not hear it or see it until it is spoken.

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In the Nameless Beginning, without Beginning, was the Light. We have not seen this Beginning. I do not know where she is, in this Beginning. I do not speak of her as a Beginning, but as a manifestation. Now the Wisdom of God, Sophia, comes forth, reaching from "end to end mightily." She wills to be also the unseen pivot of all nature, the center and significance of all the light that is *in* all and *for* all. That which is poorest and humblest, that which is most hidden in all things is nevertheless most obvious in them, and quite manifest, for it is their own self that stands before us, naked and without care. Sophia, the feminine child, is playing in the world, obvious and unseen, playing at all times before the Creator. Her delights are to be with the children of men. She is their little sister. The core of life that exists in all things is tenderness, mercy, virginity, the Light, the Life considered as passive, as received, as given, as taken, as inexhaustibly renewed by the Gift of God. Sophia is Gift, is Spirit, *Donum Dei*. She is God-given and God Himself as Gift. God as all, and God reduced to Nothing: inexhaustible nothingness. *Exinanivit semetipsum*. Humility as the source of unfailing light. Hagia Sophia in all things is the Divine Life reflected in them, considered as a spontaneous participation, as their invitation to the Wedding Feast.

Sophia is God's sharing of Himself with creatures. His outpouring, and the Love by which He is given, and known, held and loved. She is in all things like the air receiving the sunlight. In her they prosper. In her they glorify God. In her they rejoice to reflect Him. In her they are united with Him. She is the union between them. She is the Love that unites them. She is life as communion, life as thanksgiving, life as praise, life as festival, life as glory. Because she receives perfectly there is in her no stain. She is love without blemish, and gratitude without self-complacency. All things praise her by being themselves and by sharing in the Wedding Feast. She is the Bride and the Feast and the Wedding.

The feminine principle in the world is the inexhaustible source of creative realizations of the Father's glory. She is His manifestation in radiant splendor! But she remains unseen, glimpsed only by a few. Sometimes there are none who know her at all.

Sophia in ourselves is the mercy of God in us. She is the tenderness with which the infinitely mysterious power of pardon turns the darkness of our sins into the light of grace. She is the inexhaustible fountain of kindness, and would almost seem to be, in herself, all mercy. So she does in us a greater work than that of Creation: the work of new being in grace, the work of pardon, the work of transformation from brightness to brightness *tamquam a Domini Spiritu*. She is in us the yielding and tender counterpart of the power, justice and creative dynamism of the Father.

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IV. *Sunset. The Hour of Compline. Salve Regina.*

NOW THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY is the one created being who enacts and shows forth in her life all that is hidden in Sophia. Because of this she can be said to be a personal manifestation of Sophia, Who in God is *Ousia* rather than Person.

NATURA IN MARY becomes pure Mother. In her, *Natura* is as she was from the origin from her divine birth. In Mary *Natura* is all wise and is manifested as an all prudent, all loving, all pure person: not a Creator, and not a Redeemer, but perfect Creature, perfectly Redeemed, the fruit of all God's great power, the perfect expression of wisdom in mercy.

IT IS SHE, IT IS MARY, Sophia, who in sadness and joy, with the full awareness of what she is doing, sets upon the Second Person, the Logos, a crown which is His Human Nature. Thus her consent opens the door of created nature, of time, of history, to the Word of God. God enters into His creation. Through her wise answer, through her obedient understanding, through the sweet yielding consent of Sophia, God enters without publicity into the city of rapacious men. She crowns Him not with what is glorious, but with what is greater than glory: the one thing greater than glory is weakness, nothingness, poverty.

SHE SENDS the infinitely Rich and Powerful One forth as poor and helpless, in His mission of inexpressible mercy, to die for us on the Cross.

THE SHADOWS FALL. The stars appear. The birds begin to sleep. Night embraces the silent half of the earth.

A VAGRANT, a destitute wanderer with dusty feet, finds his way down a new road. A homeless God, lost in the night, without papers, without identification, without even a number, a frail expendable exile lies down in desolation under the sweet stars of the world and entrusts Himself to sleep.

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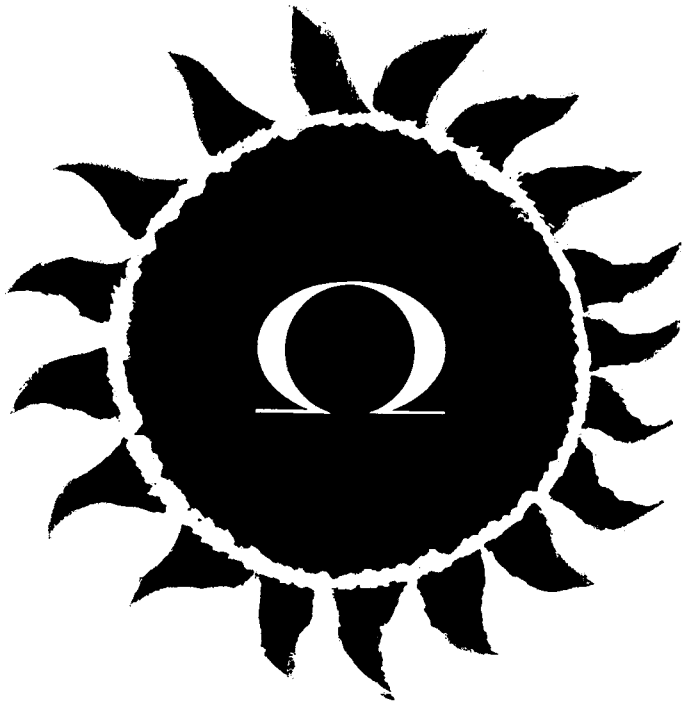

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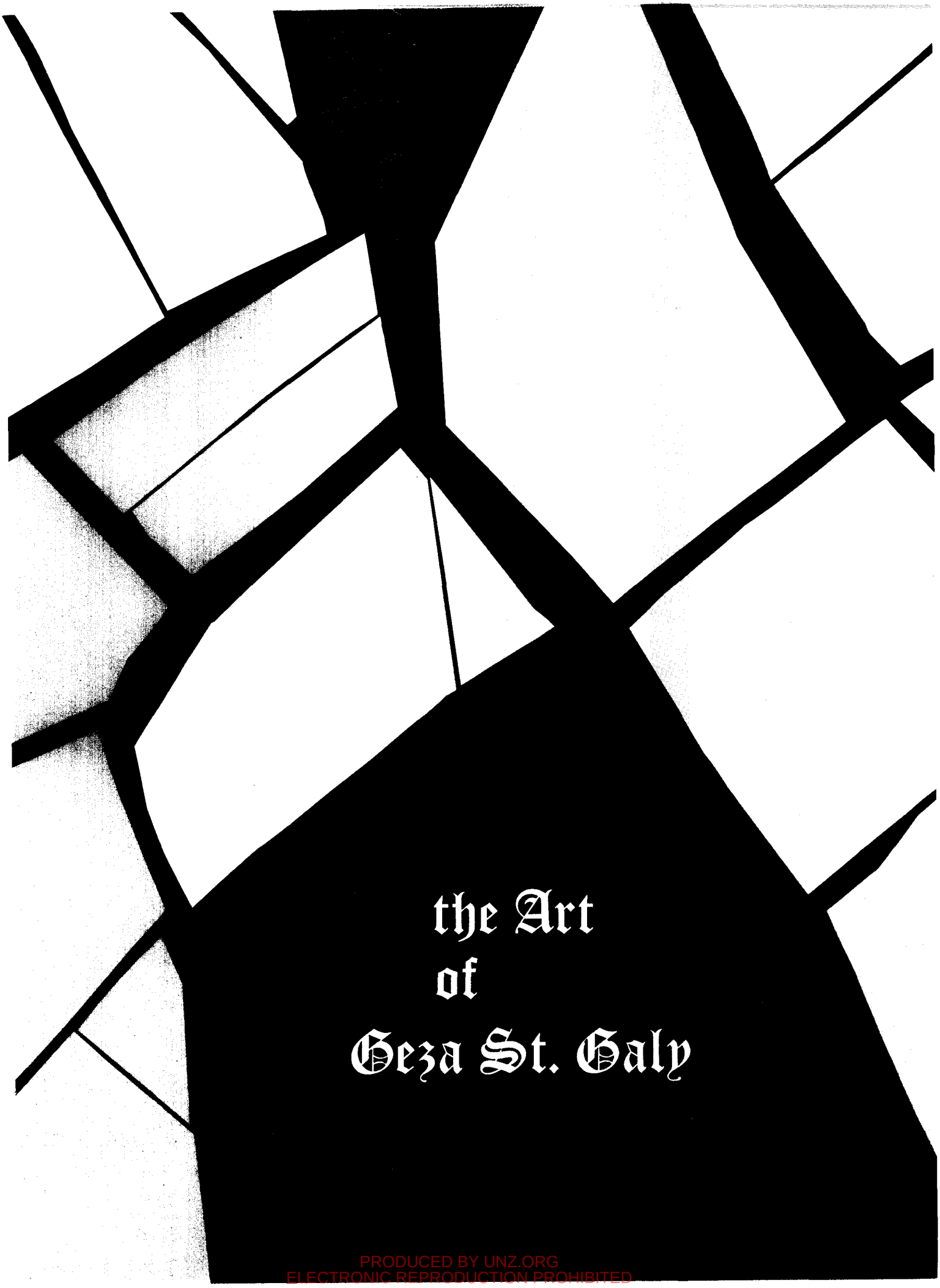

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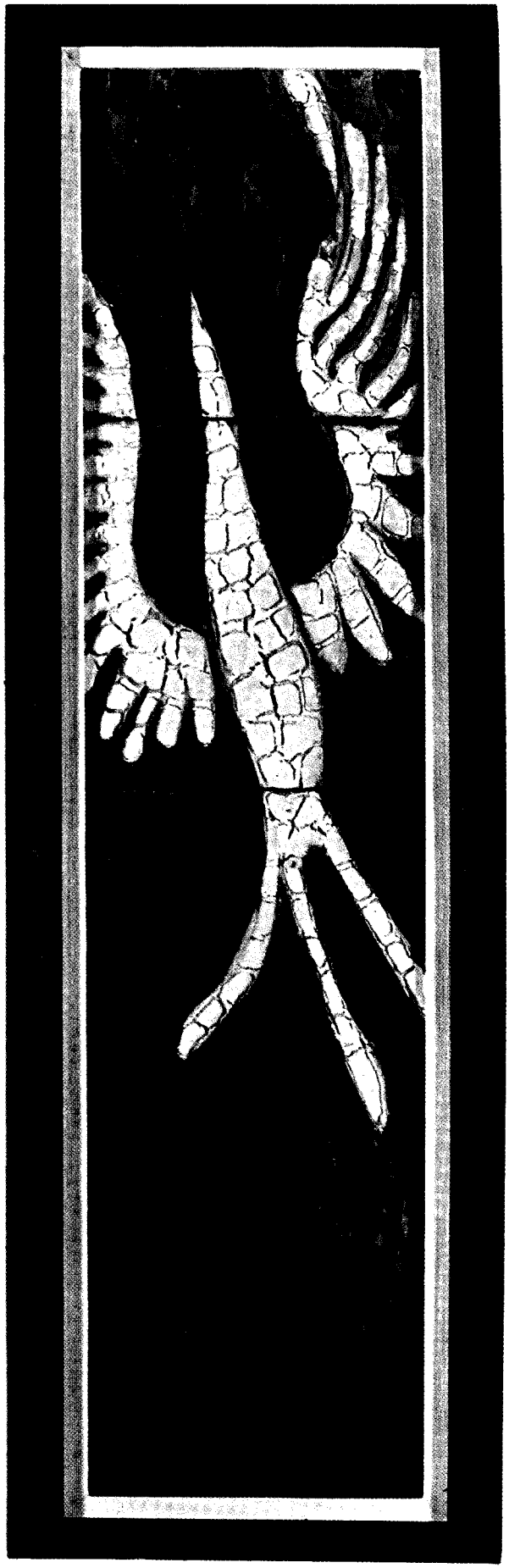

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STATION OF THE CROSS — PHOENIX
Two glazed ceramic tile panels.
The burial of Our Lord and His resurrection: Death and Transfiguration. These two panels contrast in color tones and differ in drawing techniques, yet they are closely related. In the burial scene the deep blues set the mood and heighten the agony as the Mater Dolorosa bends over her Son. His face reflects her grief making Mother and Son inseparable even by death. The over-exaggerated hands underline this drama. In contrast, the white Phoenix rises serenely from the subdued red flames, almost as He were one with them: He is born from them. I always admired the simple white lamb in the Crucifixion of Matthias Grünewald at Issenheim. By contrast the stylized lamb at the foot of the Cross relieves the tortured realism and tension of the scene. Somehow I tried to translate this contrast when placing these two panels side-by-side.

ST. BENEDICT AND ST. FRANCIS
St. Benedict: water color sketch, second study for tile mural.
St. Francis: ink in wax—sgrafitto; *plan for mosaic.*
The sketch of St. Benedict portrays the young abbot, the Roman who smashed the temple of Apollo on Monte Cassino to build upon its ruins a seat of wisdom and learning that was to influence learning in Europe and later America for centuries to come. His crosier has the design of one of the earliest in the rich collection of the Abbey. The *corvine* which became his symbol brings him bread in its beak. He holds his *Regula Monachorum:* "*Ausculta, O fili*" (Hearken, O son), which he gave to his armada of monks who were to teach the new nations of Europe. While the sons of St. Benedict spread Christianity and culture from their stone abbeys as the disciples of Lady Prudentia, the sons of St. Francis were betrothed to Lady Poverty. They built swallow's nests, becoming mendicants, the little poor of God. This sketch of St. Francis glows with red as he receives the first chronicled stigmata in the history of the Church. The background suggests the solemnity of the moment as the light pierces the uplifted hands. Man dissolves here in his God as he professes the love to the least of His creatures. It is in this love of St. Francis that Fray Serra walked the wilderness from Mexico City to San Francisco founding the beads of a living Rosary, the Franciscan Missions of California.

ST. FRANCIS — PRAYER
Glazed ceramic tile panel.
He is my favorite Saint; I was born on his Feast. It has been my sorrow since childhood that family tradition made me bear another name, not his. Reading his life, it was a consolation to learn that he too received another name in baptism and was called Giovanni Bernardone. During my travels and wanderings, I have seen him depicted in many different ways: from the magnificent frescoes of Giotto and Fra Angelico to the bird-bath figurines of florist shops on which the doves are as inevitable as on the Piazza di San Marco. I too have pictured him many times, from the deep, warm tones of his ecstasy to the subdued earthiness of the Umbrian hills. This panel shows him as the St. Francis of Peace. The background reflects the tired greens of California olive trees. The birds resemble more the seagulls circling over the vast waters of the Pacific than the doves of San Marco. Thus ripened in me the image of the Saint whom I like to call my Patron, reflecting the peace he helped me to attain in finding my place in this New World that took me in and became my home.

ST. BENEDICT
Water color sketch, first study for tile mural.
A life-size figure of St. Benedict set in a Romanesque archway. Above the arch, in the manner of mediaeval stone carvings: the diminutive façade of the Benedictine Abbey of Mons Sacer Pannonia, founded in the year 1001 by St. Stephen, first king of Hungary.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST
Water color sketch for mosaic.
The image of St. John the Baptist is a challenge to the artist. From the young, effeminate boy to the bear-like figure of a man there are many portrayals of him. Very few resemble "the prophet of the Most High," who was to go before the Lord and prepare His ways. This sketch was planned to be executed on the brick façade of a small, contemporary church. It was to have a companion piece, a vertical panel with the stylized waters of Jordan and the name of the church. The dominating golden yellows and browns are the colors of the desert. The figure of St. John is not that of an early hermit but the first pillar of the Church, the champion of Christ.

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Lord make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love: where there is injury, pardon: where there is doubt, faith: where there is despair, hope: where there is darkness, light: and where there is sadness, joy.

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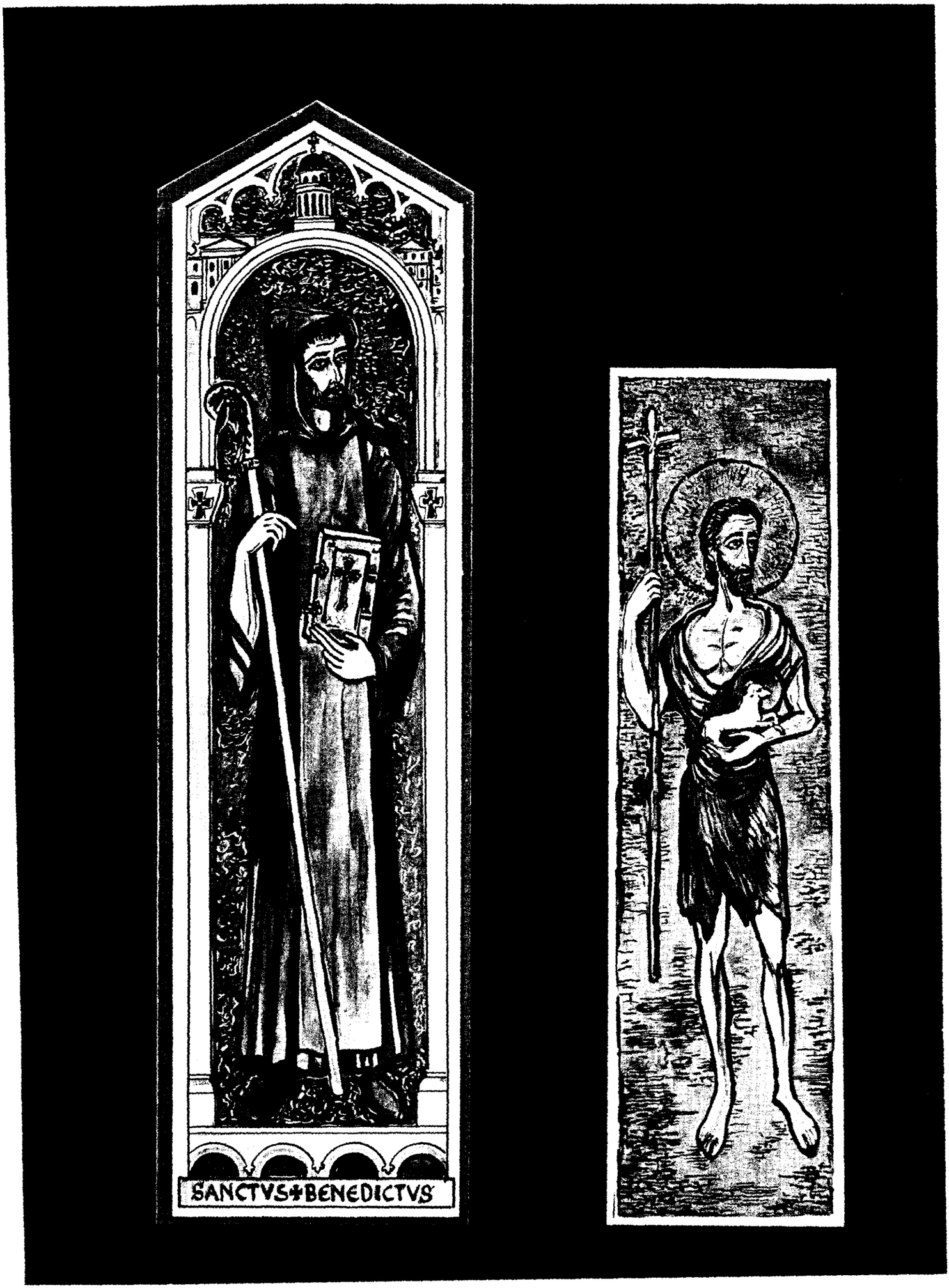

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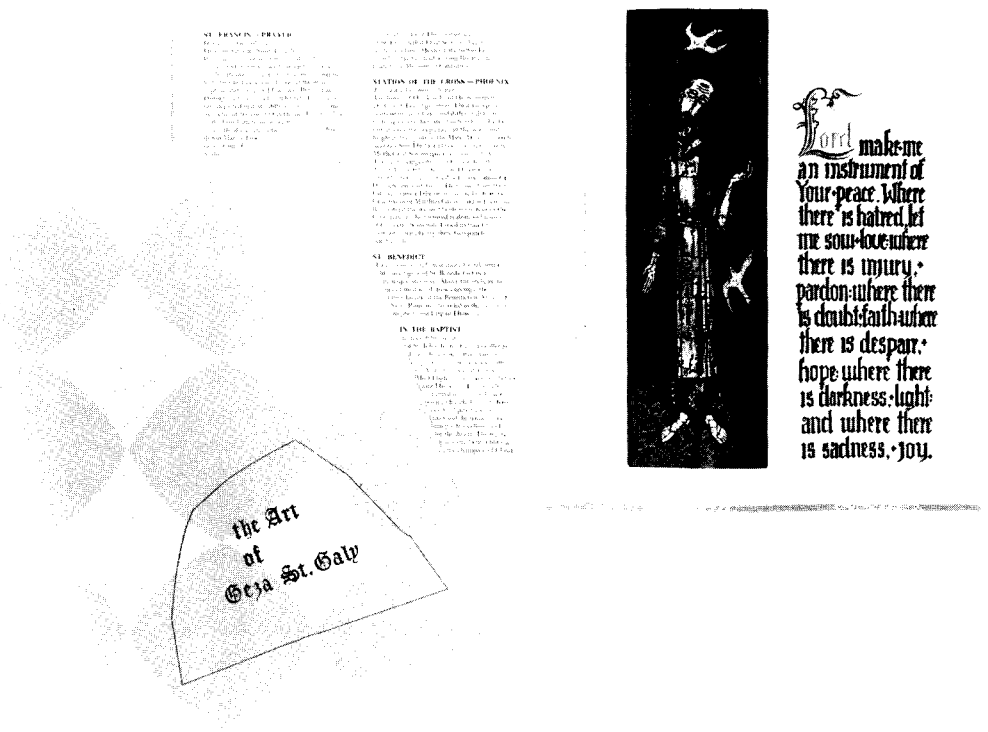

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Julien Green

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by Wallace Fowlie

I

THE VERY SPARSE, very inadequate critical comment given to the work of Julien Green is difficult to explain. He is without much doubt the most neglected of the major French writers of our day. With the appearance of each of his books, the critics of the newspapers and weeklies, many of whom are among the most penetrating and influential French critics, write favorably and solemnly about the new accomplishment. But these are the briefest of articles, and they have not been followed by the monographs and detailed studies that such a work deserves. The critical attention given to Bernanos and Mauriac, who were born somewhat earlier than Green, and to Malraux and Saint-Exupéry, born within a year of Green, is already impressive in its abundance and quality. Save for a small book by Pierre Brodin, director of the Lycée Français of New York, and a long essay by Charles Moeller, a Belgian priest, there is little critical writing on the position and the significance of Julien Green. And yet the high position of this writer is quite generally acknowledged.

To some extent this state of affairs, even more marked in America where the translations of his books are far less read than those of Malraux and Camus and Sartre, may be accounted for by the unobtrusiveness of the man Julien Green, by his unwillingness to use any of the usual means of worldly promotions. He has never sought any publicity. He does not practice journalism, nor does he sign manifestoes. He is the least often interviewed writer of prominence in France. The last three or four novels of Green, and the recent edition of his *Journal*, of 1961, designate him as a Christian writer whose faith is tested at the very heart of an exceptionally intense form of despair. Since the death of Bernanos, and since the last major novels of Mauriac, Julien Green is the one French novelist today whose books testify to the real presence of God in His apparent absence. After his reconversion to Catholicism in 1939, the readers of Green have known, through the intensity of his later novels, and through numerous entries in his *Journal*, that the renewed vigor of his faith has been tested by a veritable wave of violent temptations. This is not at all unusual in the testimonials of a new believer, or of a believer who reaffirms his love for God. At those moments of deepest belief and submission, God may seem to abandon His creature and withdraw all help and protection.

II

JULIEN GREEN was the youngest of seven children. Five years before his birth, his family had moved from Virginia to France. He was born in Paris in 1900, where he lived until the age of nineteen. His education was completely French, and his family life was American. His mother was an Episcopalian who encouraged Bible reading and study in the family circle. His father was raised as a Presbyterian and secretly joined the Catholic Church. At the age of sixteen, when Julien was still a student at the Lycée Janson-de-Sailly, he asked his father for permission to see a priest and entered the Catholic Church. When questioned about his American background and affinities, Julien Green has always emphasized the fact that he has been predominantly trained by the culture of France. His language of a writer is French. His sensitivity and attitudes seem to be as definitely French as those of any other French writer.

In 1919, he came to America for the first time and attended the University of Virginia for two years, where he studied Latin, Greek, English and Hebrew. This first direct contact with the country of his parents, the memories of Poe he discovered in Charlottesville, his studies of American writers, and especially of Nathaniel Hawthorne with whom he has many affinities of temperament and theology, and the American university life

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he observed on the campus, formed an enriching experience which was destined to appear in his writings. In speaking of his early years which preceded his first visit to America, Green has stressed two points in particular. First, the deep religious happiness of the year which followed his conversion at the age of sixteen. And secondly, the prolonged innocence in sexual matters which lasted throughout childhood and adolescence, until his twentieth year. Even during his lycée years, Green was unaware of sexual problems, and claims that such innocence has serious consequences later in a man's life.

The exterior life of Julien Green between 1928 and 1958 is fully narrated in his *Journal* where we follow his total dedication to the life of writer, his travels, his deep interest in music and painting, his extensive readings, his loyal friendships with Robert de Saint-Jean, Jacques Maritain, André Gide and the Dominican priest, Père Couturier. Even during the years 1924-1939 when Green had lost his faith, his concern with religious matters continued as well as the exterior aspects of his way of life: his solitude and isolation from the world, his studious serenity, his dignity and meditative thoughtfulness. During the years preceding the Second World War, he was strongly attracted to Buddhism. The doctrine of metempsychosis which he studied at that time is illustrated in his novel *Varouna*.

GREEN HIMSELF has described two important factors which led to his conversion of April 1939: certain conversations with Jacques Maritain and the reading of the *Traité du Purgatoire* by Saint Catherine of Genoa. To André Gide he confessed that the drama contained in George Herbert's poem *The Collar* was almost identical to his own religious drama. These are only a few of the exterior details in this writer's biography. The novels themselves are the real biography of Julien Green. They testify to the real life of the man which has not been visible to friends and public.

The number of volumes already published by Green must be close to twenty-five, among which there are a dozen novels, three plays and the important *Journal*. The sales of his books have never been extensive, his literary awards have been among the modest ones, of his three plays only *Sud* received solid critical acclaim, and the first film based upon one of his novels, *Léviathan*, was released late in 1962. And yet he ranks among the very best French writers of the century, isolated, a solitary figure in an age when most writers are committed to a cause or to a philosophy. The settings he uses are few in number, but very real in terms of his own life: the South in the United States, for such books as *Mont-Cinère*, *Moïra*, and *Chaque Homme dans sa Nuit;* Paris and especially the streets at night of Passy, as in *Epaves;* and the small French provincial town, as in *Adrienne Mesurat* and *Minuit*.

There are fairly visible periods or stages in the work of Julien Green. The first books: *Mont-Cinère*, *Adrienne Mesurat*, *Léviathan* and the volume of stories *Le Voyageur sur la Terre*, stress a certain morbidity of theme and a marked violence in the passions analyzed. An atmosphere of horror and pessimism dominate these early works. The sense of horror is greatly lessened in what, very generally speaking, might be called Green's second mode: in *L'Autre Sommeil*, for example, and *Le Visionnaire*. In these works the introspection of the hero is more intense and more probing. The inner world of the characters, as in *Minuit*, which belongs to this category, becomes so real and tangible that it replaces the exterior world of so-called reality. Such works as *Moïra* and *Chaque Homme dans sa Nuit* seem to indicate a still further development in the fictional art of the novelist. These are books of more intense tragic struggle, where the conflict between the body and the spirit dominates all else, where the religious problem becomes clearer and more harassing.

In speaking of his method of writing, Green has pointed out that his three plays were all asked for, and that the novels came to him of themselves. *Sud*, his first play, was written at the instigation of Louis Jouvet. He composed the first scene without knowing the full subject matter of the play and without knowing to what action the scene would lead. Only later did he realize that the initial scene contained in essence the entire play.

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III

THERE IS A UNIFIED prevalent meaning visible in all the writing of Julien Green. It is the story of a conquest, a slow painstaking and painful conquest of a man's inner peacefulness. The novels are in no clear sense autobiographical. Green has often stated that his characters impose themselves on him without any solicitation on his part. At the beginning of a story, he does not know what they are going to do. And he acknowledges that the subject matter of his books comes from himself, from what he calls his inner truth. The real novelist, in the Julien Green tradition, which is that of Mauriac, does not invent. In the writing of his novels, he is careful not to intervene willfully. His characters come from a censored part of himself, from a zone of his being that is not always fully acknowledged or apprehended. The hero of *Epaves* is closest to the age of Green when he wrote it, closest in physical appearance and general social situation. The critics, on the whole, have looked upon *Epaves* as one of the least successful novels. The heroes of *Moïra* and *Chaque Homme dans sa Nuit* also resemble, in the same way, Julien Green, but in these cases the difference in age between the hero and the late middleaged writer, would provide the necessary distance and disguise the autobiographical traits.

As a novelist-dramatist, Julien Green has been concerned over and over again with a characteristic of human love: an incapacity for love to realize itself. Or if there is an accomplishment in love, Green studies that moment of accomplishment as the revelation of vanity in the experiencing of carnal pleasure. In such works as *L'Autre Sommeil, Moïra* and *Chaque Homme dans sa Nuit*, this theme is treated as a fatality, close to the classical conception of tragedy. It is probably part of the larger theme of the conscience, the constantly shifting, harassed conscience of man which is suffering or which is bent on inflicting suffering.

The familiar setting of many books of Green is the small provincial town in France or America, where the monotony of daily living, the repetitiousness of gesture and speech and activity grows into an obsession. It is the image of a world that is opaque and heavy, of an atmosphere that is stiffling, and the very symbol of the kind of suffering conscience from which Green seeks liberation. He has claimed that his novels come from his subconscious, and his art of writing them is for him personally a liberation from many bonds and obsessions. He has stated that if he had not written the novels, he might have experienced some form of insanity.

IT WOULD NOT BE DIFFICULT to demonstrate that the novels, in their chronological order, reveal a progress in the novelist's understanding of himself. The *Journal*, in its 1961 edition, a large 1200 page single bound volume, shows especially the writer's progress in his understanding of man himself. The intimate portrait of Julien Green is in the novels. The intimate parts of his *Journal*, even in the new 1961 edition, have been deleted, and may be published after the writer's death. What is published is the *Journal* of the writer, the friend, the thinker, the visitor to foreign cities, the reader of poets and spiritual writers. It is a peaceful work of great literary distinction, the history of a mind in its many encounters with art, religious problems, ideas, friends. All the forms of violence: anger, passion, pride and suffering, are relegated to the novels.

The most prevalent theme of the *Journal* is religion. In his effort to understand the meaning of his life, Green returns constantly to his experience of piety, to the subtle and often unexpected invasions of God. Intermittently he writes on other themes in order to reach a clearer understanding of the meaning of his life. What may be called in a general sense the exterior world is an enigma for Julien Green, a mystery that is hard to decipher. When he is seated quietly in a room, he is more able to pierce the silence, to sense the beauty of a lamplight falling on a table, to comprehend the significance of his solitude. Without defining happiness in any absolute sense, he often describes moments of deep feeling, which at least are aspects of happiness and which come to him from observing a quiet corner of a street in Paris, from listening to a record of Bach, from the intimacy of an evening's talk with a friend.

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But God is at the center of this *Journal*, although Green never adopts the attitude of a righteously religious man. In fact he shies away from calling himself a Christian in the true sense. However, the careful reader of Julien Green, will not hesitate to call this man a Christian, for whom nothing has any meaning unless it is related to the mystery of God. His vocation of a writer is inextricably bound up with his vocation of a Christian. When he speaks of the vocation of Bernanos as going far beyond a literary vocation, one realizes that the observation applies to Green himself. The written communication of this solitary figure, so violent in his novels and so reserved in his *Journal*, is that of a man whose conscience is at all times alert to the dangers that press about him, to the moral dangers so often disguised. Moral comfort at all costs is to be avoided.

There are many passages which remind us more of older New England puritans than of a contemporary French Catholic writer. His awareness of a diabolical presence in the world, is reminiscent, to be sure, of Bernanos, but in the writings of Bernanos, a diabolical presence or apparition is histrionic and dramatically revealed. In Julien Green, it is constant and skillfully disguised. Because of this demonic presence, a Christian life, even a profundly Christian life, can be changed into a tragic adventure. The emphasis in the *Journal* is always on Green's destiny rather than on his life. He has trained himself seriously and methodically to be vigilant, to be watchful for all the threats which may enter his thoughts or which may motivate his acts. He knows as profoundly as anyone today that a Christian tends to become a phantom Christian. For him, for his particular destiny, solitude is a central fact, a central truth. His *Journal* is his inquiry into how he can live his solitude.

IV

In the writing of *Léviathan*, the harsh ill-natured woman, Mme. Grosgeorge, interested Green the most. The novel completed the first series of violent stories in which the novelist claims he followed no pre-conceived plan. *Léviathan* followed the logic of the subconscious. When years later, in 1961, Green wrote the dialogue for the film, he was forced, by the nature of the art, to follow a much more rigorous logic. The novel is the story of an insane love. Guéret's passion is at all times excessive, and especially in the scenes when he watches Angèle as she performs her mechanical gestures of laundress. *Léviathan* is the first full-length film of the young director Keigel. The lead is taken by Louis Jourdan who emphasizes in an exceptionally strong interpretation, the perilous aspect of Guéret's love. The night themes, and the childhood terrors associated with night, are in both the novel and the film.

More than almost any other work, *Moïra* gives the impression of a deliberately organized and planned work. But again here, according to the testimony of the novelist, no plan was followed. From day to day, as he wrote, he invented what his characters did and said. The novelist, as well as the reader, according to Green's theory, needs the stimulation of a surprise. In this book, as in *L'Autre Sommeil*, written much earlier, the psychology of the hero Joseph Day, a student in a Southern university of the United States, is unquestionably patterned on personal psychological traits of Julien Green. The sensibility of twenty-year-old Joseph, with his longing and hunger, with his deep religious feeling, with his love for other human beings, is reminiscent of Julien Green, although the catastrophes through which Joseph moves, are those of the novel and not of the novelist's life.

The hero Joseph Day is on the one hand obsessed by sexual drives, although he has had no sexual experience, and on the other hand strongly motivated by a religious vocation. The book's drama is in this conflict, described as such an implacable conflict that it can be looked upon as a man's fate. Throughout the story, Joseph exists from day to day without any sense of real freedom. He exerts a superficial freedom of action, but he is in reality alienated from the true source of freedom. In the early episode when he discovers Moïra's cigarette-holder on the pillow of his bed, his imagination is shackled to an insistent form of eroticism, and this condition never lessens throughout the narration. Joseph's sexual obses-

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sions are probably not centered on Moïra, but she will bear their brunt when he kills her after the scene in which she seduces him. As the scene progresses, Joseph reads the episode of *Othello* where Desdemona is suffocated, and he is led thereby to the slaying not of what he desires (as many critics have claimed) but of the creature who caused the loss of his purity. The name itself of "Moïra" means "fate," and Joseph succumbs to her as to a fascination with his fate. But his fall, the crime he commits, is not centrally the consequence of the sexual act.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF GREEN here is subtle and his theology is sound. He makes the reader feel that Joseph's error is something far different and far more important than sexual indulgence. He stresses the theological point, so central in Bernanos and Graham Greene, that almost never is a man fully responsible for his sins. In committing a sin we are acting not only for ourselves but for others as well. But if we are not fully responsible, neither are we ever completely innocent. The seeming absence of God at such moments is the privilege accorded to man to exercise his freedom. In the scene where Joseph tells his friend David about his discovery of God, one senses the catastrophe that is to follow. He describes those who are in a state of grace as burning in the fire of love, and the sinners as those who burn with anger. And he himself, because he is a man of desire, is more exposed than others to losing grace.

Le Malfaiteur was the tenth novel to be published by Julien Green. In the preface the novelist states that the writing of the book was begun in 1937 and interrupted in 1938, after one hundred pages had been written. Seventeen years elapsed before Green returned to it and completed it in 1955. He explains that religious preoccupations turned him away from the central problems raised by *Le Malfaiteur* and says that readers of the novel should not be surprised at finding in it traces of his return to a religious life.

Another reason offered by Julien Green for his abandoning of the novel was the troubled pre-war atmosphere of 1938 when the whole world seemed threatened. His return to the work in 1955 is explained by his desire to complete a manuscript, but even more, to call attention to one of the most tragic aspects of physical love in the modern world. This aspect of carnality, as it involves the spiritual life, is the central theme of the novel. It is a stronger, more specific and more detailed treatment of Green's first play, *Sud*, of 1952, the love of a woman for a man incapable of loving women.

There is no trace in *Le Malfaiteur* of the interruption of the writing in 1938. Characterized like all of Green's novels by unity of tone, *Le Malfaiteur* is a skillfully told story which centers on a significant psychological drama. As he had done often in his previous novels, Green depicts again the oppressive atmosphere of a French provincial house, inhabited by women whose repressions and jealousies help to precipitate a series of disasters.

THE NEW DIMENSION, announced in the prefatory remarks, is the novelist's effort to see the human problem of the protagonist Jean, "the transgressor," in its religious context. The transgression itself, Jean's homosexuality, is never described or analyzed. One is told about it in the opening pages, but it is Jean's secret, never lucidly defined. Incidents relating it are only obliquely referred to, but one feels from the beginning of the story to the end the weight of this transgression and its fatality. The religious context is even more faintly indicated. Jean himself asks the question to which no satisfactory answer is given in the book. He asks why he is reproached for being what God made him.

The art of this book is in the presentation of Jean, who dominates the novel and yet is absent from all the major scenes. He is the distant relative of a family who give him a room in their house, where he leads a writer's life of solitude. The family also give shelter to a young girl, Hedwige, who falls in love with a young man. This man has no interest in women. He is venal, self-centered and has been a lover of Jean. Jean, the conscious sinner and the knowing sufferer, admires the innocence and the purity of Hedwige. He tries to warn her of the hopelessness of her love. All he succeeds in doing is unconsciously, by his own suicide, opening up to Hedwige the way to her own tragic end.

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This summary of the novel does no justice to the power of the drama it relates between a creature and the Creator, to the variant it offers on the problem of evil. The book actually contains two dramas which are closely related. There is first Jean's drama, or society against the individual, and there is secondly Hedwige's drama, or woman in love with a man who cannot love her. Jean is alone with his secret because it cannot be expressed. Hedwige has no secret but she is alone because she does not understand. For both Jean and Hedwige, love is forbidden in that irremediable way which the French associate with the tragedies of Racine. At one point in the work, Jean and Hedwige are referred to as "anarchists" because their solitude and their innocence lead to crime. With delicacy, and with economy of language, Julien Green has written in *Le Malfaiteur* a story of fatality as it manifests itself in the most ordinary of lives.

IN HIS LAST NOVEL, published in 1960, *Chaque Homme dans sa Nuit*, Green has written his most profound work, the one which his others, especially *Moïra* and *L'Autre Sommeil*, seem to have been preparing. The title is drawn from a line of Victor Hugo: *Chaque homme dans sa nuit s'en va vers la lumière.* The "night" is the complex of religious problems and anxieties, and the world of sexual obsessions. It is especially the harassed domain of the soul where religion and sex meet, where each set of problems seek its solution or harmonization from the other. More explicitly than in any of his previous books, but without ever neglecting their complexity, Green presents in *Chaque Homme dans sa Nuit*, a *summa* of the deeply disturbing factors in several lives and especially in the life of his protagonist.

Wilfred, a young American of twenty-four, living in the South, has a sincere profound faith. He is a Catholic in a Protestant milieu. His sexual drives are so strong that he lives in constant fear of alienating God and damning his soul. Without wishing in the least to play the role of tempter, this is the role he actually plays because of his beauty. He attracts both women and men of various types, and the dramas which break out are concerned more with sexual desire than with love. Behind the immediate dramas of a very strong and desperate sensuality is the greater drama between faith and carnal desire.

Julien Green is perfectly aware that the gravity of carnal sin has become almost unintelligible in the modern world. With great wisdom he places the story of *Chaque Homme* in America where sexuality still has meaning in terms of religion, and where in an atmosphere of Catholic and Protestant tensions, such a drama as he depicts is perfectly understandable. Conflicts of opinion involving religious beliefs are sharper today in the United States than in France. If an attitude of indifference is opposed to a problem of belief, all trace of a real struggle disappears. If, when sexuality begins in the life of a young man, religious convictions diminish, the kind of drama which Julien Green analyzes loses its meaning. He understood that such a drama as we follow in *Chaque Homme dans sa Nuit* is far more conceivable today in America than in a Latin country.

V

LIFE IN ITS USUAL MOTIVATIONS, in its day by day happenings, in its monotony and repetitiousness, appears to Julien Green the novelist as a force that is almost incomprehensible. He is able, as a realist is, to depict life in its familiar setting and with its customary events, but he tends in his writing to evoke those settings and situations which will give to life an unusual aspect, which will cause it to resemble an apparition, a nightmare even, an alienated world. There are scenes in his novels on the quays along the Seine late at night, and a graveyard setting for the fight between Joseph and Bruce in *Moïra*, which emphasize this fantasy world of dreams, and the themes of human solitude and incommunicability, which, as in *Adrienne Mesurat*, characterize many of his books. But such motifs as these, and even the theme of boredom, are always related to the spiritual problems of man. Green is primarily interested in trying to fathom the meaning of the invisible world of the spirit. With such an emphasis and such an obsession, he is a spiritual writer by comparison with, for example, André Gide who is not essentially a spiritual writer. The many conversa-

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tions between Gide and Green, which are related in the *Journals* of both writers, testify to this fundamental divergence in their sensibility of artists.

The deserted lumberyard in *L'Autre Sommeil* is, characteristically in Green's work, a place where life is revealed in its strangeness, in its lack of resemblance with what is habitual. Green believes that man lives far more in a world of the spirit than in a physical material world. This explains to some extent the sense of fatality which obsesses his heroes, and the sense of imprisonment which a house or a city or a specific milieu gives to them. His world is not so much that of a nightmare or of madness (these words have been overused by critics of Green), as it is the dream of purity, the dream of happiness, a spiritual happiness, which cannot be hemmed in by physical boundaries. He understands, more deeply than other types of mankind, the mystic and the extreme sensualist, because each of them is in search of the absolute. Green understands the relationship which exists between the fire of divine love and the fire of human passion.

In several entries in his *Journal*, the writer expresses his conviction that his action of a novelist is to entrust the most concealed parts of his life and the profoundest parts, to the characters in his novels and plays. To this very general but all-important rule, defined by the novelist himself, should be added the general climate or atmosphere of his world which is repeated and recast from story to story. It is a world which shows no sense (or very little sense) of what we think of as a social world. No social type is analyzed as such, in the novels of Green. In this sense, he is the opposite of Balzac. One realizes that many of the heroes of Green come from a modest milieu, but the milieu itself in its social characteristics does not form a part of the novel.

There is no trace of a thesis being demonstrated in the novels of Green, no trace of a personal idea or concept being promulgated by means of the novel. He is at all times, in the novels, purely the novelist. He is never the essayist or the polemicist (as Bernanos is, somewhat to the detriment of his novels). He is the least "committed," the least *engagé*, of the major French novelists of the past twenty years. In fact, Julien Green does not look upon himself as "representative" of his age. According to his *Journal*, he feels he has lived on the margin of his age. The French word *engagement*, used today to designate the social role of a writer and his commitment to a way of life, and also to designate, for those who are *engagés*, the value of a literary work, is not applicable to the case of Julien Green. And yet it is impossible for the type of novel he writes not to be "existentialist." In his work a human personality is analyzed as it develops in terms of its multiple relationships with the world. The central preoccupation of Julien Green in his novels, plays and *Journal*, is the analysis of a human being.

The human being he always analyzes is the man or the woman who is divided by irreconcilable aspirations. As an artist, Julien Green knows if he succeeds in recasting with the utmost truthfulness a fully-lived human experience, he will at the same time cast in literary form a universal experience. The psychic climate is the only one that really interests this writer, and with this interest foremost, he recreates the world in accord with his own obsessions and spiritual struggles. Given the sensitivity of such a writer, and given his skill of narration, whatever he invents in his works of fiction is his truth. The truth he communicates is in the story of passion he places at the center of his novel. It is in the extraordinary sense of fatality which obsesses his hero and deprives him of all freedom, because it is portrayed as a prison from which there is no escape.

Whether it is the nascent madness of Adrienne Mesurat or the exasperated puritanism of Joseph Day in *Moïra*, the inescapable fate is omnipresent both during the periods of boredom, so faultlessly delineated by Green, and at the dramatic moments in each book when we witness the tragic consequences of the boredom. When Green defines boredom as one of the faces of death, he seems to mean that boredom is that experience of man from which God is absent. The destiny which the hero of Green is obliged to will and to follow was not chosen by him, and during its course, he is more conscious of his isolation than of anything else.

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As opposed to the Existentialist hero, the hero of Green does not create or invent his particular destiny. It is imposed upon him and he never escapes it. But the hero of Green and the hero of Sartre are unable to avoid the fatality of death and they both find themselves isolated in an incomprehensible world.

THE DILEMMA of the literary hero, as Green presents him, is often luminously clarified in the *Journal* where the personal dilemma of the writer is analyzed. The dilemma is, more often than not, raised to a degree of anguish over an incapacity to choose between the world and God. The fundamental dualism of human nature is the obstacle to the realization of any peace of body and spirit. In one form or another, Green is constantly opposing the portrait of the man he is, with the portrait of the man he would like to be. Worldliness, or social life in its ordinary sense, has always appeared to him as unreal. The mechanical repetitiousness, the rehearsed responses of men and women engaged in social conventions and activities have almost a nightmare aspect of unreality in this art. Only two experiences are able for Green to efface the tenacious sense of unreality that dominates such a large proportion of our conscious hours: the experience of love when it is intensely felt, and, especially, the religious life. The experience of prayer when the presence of God is felt, has the power of nullifying whatever mirages of unreality beset the human spirit. To live in accordance with an inner life of prayer is for such a man as Julien Green the only solution to the seemingly invincible problem of carnality and boredom. His capacity for an inner life of meditation and his conviction that such a life would be both an understanding and a surpassing of his destiny, form the most persistent and the most moving theme in the *Journal*.

The many notations on Green's readings, and especially on religious readings, might lead one to think that he finds God in the writings of theologians and poets. This is not true. The importance of reading is always subordinated to the conviction that God is found within man rather than on the pages of philosophers and in the visions of poets. Books tend to construct systems or offer a complete explanation of some given experience, and this tendency will always appear false to such a spirit as Green's, sensitive to the specious appearances of truth, and aware that the realities of man are carnal and spiritual, and that they are within man in their will to accomplish their respective destinies.

Fundamentally the *Journal* of Julien Green is a treatise on the implacable dualism of human nature. The desires of the body, in their relentless attacks, are able to introduce into the mind of the body an element of madness. The power of each side is limitless, and because of this belief, the art of Julien Green is that of the novelist. If the body is the prison of the soul, the soul is the prison of the body. Any possible reconciliation between the two is fated to be short-lived. At every collapse of such a reconciliation, the dilemma starts up again, which in some form or other is always the question of how a life of pleasure can be reconciled with a life of religious practice.

Julien Green stands apart from other contemporary French writers. He is a truly spiritual writer today in the sense that his books represent an anguished refusal to accept man's fate. He knows more profoundly and sensitively than most, that the education of modern man does everything possible to invalidate and decry the spiritual in man. It would seem that a state of indifference to religious values is the goal of today's leading masters. The writings of Julien Green form a refusal to negate the attempts of God, in such an age of spiritual sloth, to help man recover his lost freedom. If a spiritual victory is not possible, the will to struggle is perhaps the only possible form of victory for today.

WALLACE FOWLIE *was born in Brookline, Massachusetts, in 1908, and was educated at Harvard. Dr. Fowlie, one of the leading authorities on French literature, is best known for his sophisticated and scholarly books of literary criticism:* Mallarmé; Rimbaud; Claudel; De Villon à Péguy; Clowns and Angels; Jacob's Night; Dionysus in Paris; *and* A Guide To Contemporary French Literature. *He has published volumes of poetry in French and English, a novel, and many translations. He is presently teaching at the University of Colorado.*

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Vessel Of Dishonor. By Paul Roche. New York: Sheed and Ward. 306 pp. $4.95.

Somewhere there lurks dishonor, but whether it is in the novel or whether it is in the fact that Paul Roche found a publisher, no one will ever know for certainty. Just as a ghastly international blunder produces face saving cover ups, so will this literary blunder call upon the pledged silence of the conspirators who allowed this outrage to emerge from the print shop. Were it not for the considerable reputation of the publisher, and the advertising abuses used to incite interest in this vastly misrepresented novel, this reviewer would scarcely have passed the third or fourth page before dropping it into the wastebasket, much as one discards junk mail.

But—and this is an enormous "but" —Mr. Roche wrote, and Sheed and Ward both published *Vessel of Dishonor* and advertised it extensively, so we have to live, what can only be hoped is a small period of time, with the problems posed by the novel.

In approaching the novel itself, as distinct from the publisher's role in all this, one must assume the serious intent of the author, although every once in a while there crops up the sneaking suspicion that Mr. Roche is pulling our leg. The first appalling fact in confronting this book is that it is atrociously written. Mr. Roche has a style—some might call it breathless—that is really only appropriate to *The Ladies Home Journal* or possibly even *True Romance*.

Mr. Roche's prose bubbles with boyish enthusiasm; indeed, it gushes almost girlishly, as one long confession between sorority sisters after the senior prom. One can almost smell the corsage and see the fraternity pin pointedly displayed on a modest bosom. It begins on the first page where Martin and Toby (the former eventually emerges as the hero; the latter his comic foil) are walking along an ivy-covered front. Toby has just finished speaking. Mr. Roche then tells us: "He was a little out of breath. It wasn't easy to keep up with Martin—especially if you were joking and teasing and trying to wring a smile out of his good-looking but somber face. Now he planted himself squarely in Martin's path and threw up a look of challenge from his round, tousled, wire-rimmed spectacled face."

Mr. Roche, who certainly admires the human form almost to obsession, reaches his high C's when he describes Martin Haversham, seminarist, subdeacon, priest, husband. This on the second page: "He was just twenty-two, with a lithe but powerful body, and the curls of his black hair were plastered flat with water. At half an inch over six feet he seemed even taller in his cassock: a garment which, like God's grace in the Bible, adds to those who have it, but takes away from those who do not. He turned his eyes on his friend: eyes of a hot smouldering brown which seemed kindled rather in Spain or Italy than Northumbria, where his father came from, or the pale champagne-covered undulations of Rheims in Northern France, the ancestral home of his mother. His lips had a clean, quick line to them, and looked as though they could just as easily have laughed as break now into that tortured hesitation which in a face less perfectly balanced would have been a sneer."

A good portion of the novel is a flash back of Martin's *Big Sin* while in Italy. As if to heighten the sense of horror that the reader is supposed to experience, the author has Martin's reveries take place during a six day retreat. Mr. Roche treats sex and religion with the same breathless enthusiasm, and the retreat and that awful thing done in Italy begin to meld into a frightful succession of exclamation marks. "O Rome, Rome! She tortured and she delighted him. She sanctified him and she returned him to instincts he had forgotten." Finally, after sprinkling every experience and encounter with sophomoric sexual overtones, Mr. Roche has Martin make love to a frank, charming, beautiful, breathlessly enthusiastic girl from Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A. After the ecstasy he calls out: "Vanessa, Vanessa, nothing matters any more, nothing is of value . . . nothing!"

Martin protests his love of the priesthood, his love of God, but he does it so ineptly that no reader can come away with anything less than gross skepticism for Martin's sincerity. One suspects Martin of habitual lying. This seems to result from the author's incredible preoccupation with Martin's good looks. Further, Martin is similarly preoccupied, leaving even the most sympathetic reader with the unassailable conviction that Martin is a shameless narcissist. Also, he is a hedonist. This unlikely combination, we are told, aspires to the priesthood. Also, we are told, Martin suffers (though with singular ease) from scruples, and, at various times in his life, spends more time in the confessional than going about his business. His confessors, drawn with the author's usual skill with superficialities, brush aside his sins and doubts as if they were mere indiscretions that accompany boyish pranks, or at worst, small imperfections comparable to a nun's fleeting distraction during evening benediction.

Martin Haversham becomes a priest, and what a darling assistant he makes! "On Saturday nights his confessional had a marked attention paid to it. The benches near it were always filled and when the penitents stepped away they could not hide the new hope shining in their eyes. 'Such sympathy! Such understanding!' They whispered in their hearts as they emerged shriven from sin." The ladies of the parish take to him from the start and deluge him with gifts that spring from their maternal hearts. In time, the gifts become embarrassing and Martin,—no, Father Haversham, actually blushes.

The story goes on, to no one's surprise, with bubbles of conflict that

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skim the surface of human suffering. Inevitably, as his vocation begins to crumble, the authorities that juggle curates display, in Mr. Roche's hands, an awesome stupidity by sending Father Haversham to America, more or less for a change of scenery and a new start, removed from habitual experiences that made him fall into that "Italian" sin. To keep no one in suspense, our hero meets up with Vanessa on the boat, and from then on, nothing is left undone. There is the sham of struggle briefly etched by the author, but no one is taken in. It has the authenticity of professional wrestling.

Almost unable to hide his joy, the author marries Martin and Vanessa off to each other in a conclusion that can only leave the reader aghast. Mr. and Mrs. Haversham live in a small college town in New York. Mrs. Haversham keeps house in a three-room apartment that overlooks the lake and woods beyond the playing fields. Mr. Haversham teaches philosophy to an enraptured group of boys and girls. Martin is happy, so utterly, utterly happy as almost to produce tears. We have a final playing of the parts, a final splurge of positive thinking, as the author closes out the bubbly business of Fr. Haversham v. Mr. Haversham. Man and wife wonder about the man's guilt. Vanessa says:

" '. . . After all, if you believe in God, nothing, not even our mistakes, can absolutely be outside his will.'

" 'But I am guilty,' he said.

" 'Aren't we all?'

"He put out his arm and clutched Vanessa's hand. It felt clean and soft, like a leaf. Her fragrance above him reminded him of the sea. A filament of her golden hair fell across his cheek.

" 'I love you . . . God bless you,' he said.

"He let his head sink back and closed his eyes. 'Vanessa is my other half,' he thought, 'the natural firmament on which I stand. She is teaching me to find again my feelings, so long buried and disguised. I thought I was an angel, and I was not a human being.'

"Softly Vanessa pulled her hand away. He was asleep now. She tiptoed toward the kitchen to make their dinner. At the door she turned and looked back at him. For millions of her fellows—for all Catholics—he was perhaps the world's greatest failure. God's judgment that, or man's? For her he could never be a failure. She looked at him the longer. The young creature lying there, his deep hot eyes closed in sleep, his head a cluster of bacchic shadows, all his beauty slung out vulnerably in repose, was for her—body and soul—the perfection of creation: the epitome of man. Tomorrow she would tell him God had blessed them. Yes, no matter what he thought: God had blessed them. The proof was hers—innocent and free (or with only Adam's sin waiting to be washed away, as he would say)—stirring within her; another human being, another soul for heaven if he liked: the fruit of their meeting, fruit of her womb, the fruit of his failure."

This last moment of the novel poses the only serious question: that is, does this reflect the author's moral view of a grave sin, or is it merely further evidence of his literary ineptitude? If the former, it is unthinkable that a Catholic publisher should publish it; this on moral grounds. If the latter, it is unfortunate that *any* publisher would give it even a second reading; this on aesthetic grounds.

There can be no doubt about the literary merit of this novel; it possesses none.

This, then, brings to play the role of the publisher, both as to its responsibility for publishing *Vessel of Dishonor*, and its responsibility for the promotion granted it. If Sheed and Ward had a great many novels to its credit, grinding out titles like so many sausages, almost anyone could forgive an incidental *faux pas* such as Mr. Roche's latest work. It would be like Ford forgetting to put an engine in one of its cars. But Sheed and Ward publishes very few novels and therefore, presumably, spends a little extra time in the selections it makes. Of course, the American branch may have been *directed* to publish it, in which case, any of us who have experienced military life will readily understand the true nature of the situation and search out the culprit in London. But, since man is endowed with free will, we must assume New York had its own will, unless countervailing evidence is brought forth. This theory is buttressed by the glowing comments of Mr. Philip Scharper whose endorsement appeared in *The Trumpet*.

The seriousness of Sheed and Ward's part in all this lies in the Catholicity of the company. With a fine reputation for orthodoxy, if for nothing more, Sheed and Ward's name under a title almost acts as an informal imprimatur, and the general public has come to rely on it. A novel such as *Vessel of Dishonor*, which at least brushes with scandal, if it doesn't explicitly cause it, should have been more carefully weighed before allowing it to tarnish a valued reputation. This, of course, is to say nothing of a literary evaluation which, obviously, was never made.

Further, forgetting that the dog was allowed out of the kennel in the first place, Sheed and Ward's advertising methods deserve a severe reprimand. As relating to everything else surrounding this novel, there are two aspects, literary and moral, that require examination.

The most offensive, because so clearly false, is the literary equation foisted on the public. No matter *what* Sheed and Ward's publicity department says, Roche does not equal Greene, nor Bernanos, nor Mauriac; nor anyone else of talent. To say that he does is a lie. Parenthetically, most adverse criticism has come from clerical reviewers, to which the publisher implies a vested interest in safeguarding the good name of the clergy. Let it be noted that the present reviewer is a layman. Let it also be noted that the publisher, in a number of advertisements, has im-

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plied Father Harold Gardiner's endorsement by publishing a brief excerpt. A reading of the complete Gardiner review shows clearly his thorough dislike of the novel. This taking of a thing out of context is cheating.

The advertising surrounding this novel creates the impression that it is spiritually oriented. It is not. It mocks spirituality, but whether by design or Mr. Roche's heroic ineptitude, one cannot say. The dust jacket's lyricism over Mr. Roche's novel ("Its [*Vessel of Dishonor*] implications go far deeper than any mere saga of a 'priest gone astray.' Its insights are at once both more pervasive and more immediate. . . . That he [Martin Haversham] discovers his own submerged humanity, that he sees with new eyes the beauty of both the priesthood *and* the world, are *beyond* question.") is contrived nonsense. Martin ended as he began, an addicted narcissist with no more insight than one gains from a mirror. The point is, that the advertising is not merely, as is so typical, exaggerated, it is downright misleading if not actual misrepresentation.

The reason for taking everyone so strongly to task is that the subject of Mr. Roche's novel is such a serious one. If he had written about a feather brained priest who had allowed his uninsured church to burn down just as the mortgage had been paid off, or if some silly nun had gotten involved, quite contrary to Mother Superior's orders, in a crime (Loretta Young would be perfect for the part), not much attention would be paid. But Mr. Roche chose to tell what is probably the most serious story that could concern a priest, his 'going astray' as the dust jacket so archly put it. Can anyone in conscience *really* equate *Vessel of Dishonor* with *The Power and the Glory* or *Diary of a Country Priest?* Can anyone in conscience say Martin Haversham is flesh and blood? A priest? A man? He is a cartoon, badly drawn, an insult to every priest—or man—who ever lived, including priests who have fled their vocation for the life of total abandonment to lust. Indeed, Martin Haversham wasn't even a cartoon; he was what a mirror reflects in an empty room. And Sheed and Ward should be ashamed.

—Edward M. Keating

Contemporaries. By Alfred Kazin. Boston: Little, Brown and Company. 513 pp. $7.50.

Edmund Wilson will be sixty-eight this year. That is the explanation of quite a lot of recent critical activity: the death watch is beginning to form. The book trade being what it is, there will have to be "a new Edmund Wilson" or "a young Edmund Wilson" or "our finest Man of Letters since Edmund Wilson." Alfred Kazin is not *new:* his first book, *On Native Grounds,* goes back to 1942. And at forty-seven, he is not *young.* And he is not a *Man of Letters,* and there are several hundred reasons why he is not at all up to Edmund Wilson. But with his new book, Kazin enters the competition. At any rate, it is impossible to imagine a good reason for collecting 513 pages of Alfred Kazin and printing them on quality stock paper and pricing the collection at $7.50 and dedicating the whole enterprise to Edmund Wilson, as if water could be turned into wine by these methods or Alfred Kazin into a Man of Letters.

Kazin has brought together here seventy-odd essays and reviews, mostly ones that have appeared earlier in magazines or as introductions to books. His book opens with a long essay, "The Background to Modern Literature," written in the prose and the approximate depth one thinks of as "Barnes and Noble" or "College Outline." Then there is a block of essays and reviews grouped under the rubric, "Relevance of the American Past." Kazin assumes that by using portentous titles of this kind he can impose thematic unity on a random sampling of his pieces from over the years. The pieces here deal with Melville, Emerson, Thoreau, Emily Dickinson, and others—roughly the greats of the American 19th century. None of the pieces is at all memorable, and the fakery of labeling the section "Relevance of the American Past" is demonstrated by the fact that there are no essays on Hawthorne, Poe, Whitman, or Twain. Unless we are to infer these men are irrelevant. The next section, "Old Boys, Mostly American," is less portentously titled, but the pieces there collected, with the exception of the Dreiser essay, are not very much. There are pieces on Lawrence, Lewis, Marquand, three on Faulkner—three strikes—Pound, O'Hara, and others. The center of Kazin's book is "Famous Since the War," a section made up mainly of reviews dealing with Algren, Agee, Thomas, Lowell, Malamud, Powers, Behan, Salinger, and numerous others. I shall be saying later on that Kazin is at his best within the modest confines of the review, and these pieces are the best proof of that. They are mostly pretty sensible; at least they are what J. Donald Adams could not have managed. But reviews do not translate into books very well. Unless they are extremely well written or are unified by an idea, they will seem scrappy and disjointed. And that is the trouble with Kazin's. He is aware of this but unable to do anything about it. His usual strategy is to try to gloss it over, as in the next section, of his book, which he calls "The European Current." This is pretty glossy for seven small reviews and an essay dealing, respectively, with Stendhal, Mann, Singer, Jacoba Van Velde, Camus, Wiesel, Christiane Rochefort, and Sholom Aleichem. What is Stendhal doing anyway in a collection called *Contemporaries?* And without even asking about writers who have been left out, where are verse and drama or where are Italy and Spain—two kinds and a sub-

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continent? Of the pieces themselves, that on Sholom Aleichem is very good, Beta Plus. The rest are just competent reviews. The next section, "Places," brings together travel pieces dealing with Kazin's experiences in Germany, Russia, Puerto Rico, and Israel. Except for some acute reportage on Russian writers, Kazin is just pompous in this section, insufferably so on Puerto Rico. The last three sections of his book are "Freud and His Consequences," "The Puzzle of Modern Society," and "The Critic's Task." Freud, a Kazin hero, is the subject of five undistinguished pieces chiefly remarkable for revealing that Kazin continues to think Freud was a scientist. In "The Puzzle of Modern Society" Kazin reprints twelve pieces dealing with recent political and cultural history. Two of them have as their purpose sucking up to Edmund Wilson, and they do an unconscionable lot of it. As here, for example: "T. S. Matthews, who is almost sixty, wants his readers to know that when Edmund Wilson was a little boy, his parents, worried about his excessive bookishness, put him into a baseball suit and gave him a baseball outfit. Young Wilson promptly gave away the outfit and sat himself under a tree with a book. Brave Edmund Wilson!" In another piece, Kazin tries to rule Leslie Fiedler off the turf for bad critical manners and renegade liberal politics. All this, of course, is part of the careerist strategy of Kazin's book. Edmund Wilson is God and Alfred Kazin is his sole prophet—and heir. The only good thing in this entire section is Kazin's remark on Adlai Stevenson: "The extraordinary identification that so many American intellectuals make with Stevenson has often struck me as loyalty not to a lost cause, but to lostness as a cause." In the last section of the book, Kazin turns to a consideration of "The Critic's Task." The one clear thing in these six extraordinarily turbid pieces is again the careerist strategy. Kazin praises only those critics who cannot be regarded as possible rivals to himself. Thus, he has the highest praise for Kenneth Tynan, which is safe because Tynan is no longer in this country. Besides, Tynan is primarily a drama critic, and Kazin never writes on the drama. Kenneth Rexroth, on the other hand, a possible rival, is sneered at for being self-educated. This comes very strangely from Alfred Kazin who can never say too much about his devotion to the memory of Whitman. The general propositions that Kazin advances about criticism are mainly these: it should be aimed at a general audience and well-written; it should be strongly partisan; it should judge every work by the unique internal standards of that work, no general standards existing. Every one of these, we shall later see, Kazin contradicts in theory or practice.

But first, let us look at his book as a whole. To do so is to be immediately struck with one of Kazin's failings. In the whole collection there is not a piece on the drama. And there are only four on verse, three of them faked: those on Pound, Thomas, and Lowell. For Kazin tries to cover up his incapacity with verse by writing about the "case" of Ezra Pound and the "posthumous fame" of Dylan Thomas, gossip instead of criticism. The review of Robert Lowell's *Life Studies* uses the same dodge with only slightly more subtlety. Kazin gossips along about the autobiographical revelations in the poems instead of talking about the poems. The few properly critical comments he makes only reveal that he has kept up his subscriptions to the quarterlies. He feels a little safer with Emily Dickinson's verse. He slides easily into the tones of the professional vulgarizer. He becomes expansive; he even permits himself to add a Kazin idea to Emily Dickinson lore: "I like Emily Dickinson's dashes. . . . [they] have a light fierceness." That is the sum of what you will learn about verse from Alfred Kazin, man of letters.

Kazin is more at home with prose, especially with bad prose. He is very devoted, for example, to Theodore Dreiser on whom he gets off the best essay in the book. Also to Saul Bellow and Bernard Malamud. But outside this range, he is pretty inept. This explains the astonishing omissions in his book: Joyce, Fitzgerald, Hemingway. It explains also why Kazin's writing usually becomes strained when he is forced to deal with great prose. For example, he says the prose of *Moby Dick* is "remarkably easy" and "natural," whereas in truth it is highly formal and artificial. Kazin's basically romantic assumptions about writing—he is a "life" man of the naive variety—do not let him admit that good prose can be the product of art. Thus he is forced into such obvious distortions as calling the prose of *Moby Dick* "remarkably easy" and "natural." And he will cheerfully contradict himself to attack good prose, as in his treatment of Henry James. Thus, he slaps the wrist of Diana Trilling for offering a Freudian explanation of the failure of D. H. Lawrence, a Kazin hero. But the same Alfred Kazin is capable of saying that Henry James failed because of "complete sexual repression." Which is having it both ways.

Now for the large Kazin ideas: these are really touching. Kazin thinks criticism should be written by professionals for a general audience. To this, one can only agree. The professional can escape the small orthodoxy of the academy and its pedantry of expression. Alfred Kazin is always pounding his chest and saying he has done so. But the truth is that all Kazin's ideas come from academicians. *On Native Grounds* is full of the vulgarizer's formulas: "as Lionel Trilling has often complained," "as Fred Lewis Pattee said," "Miriam Beard has observed," "as Jacques Barzun pointed out." *Contemporaries* is full of these too: "as Irving Howe has noted,"

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"to use Jacques Barzun's significant phrase," and so forth. (And it is worth noting that neither Howe nor Barzun is listed in the index of Kazin's book. He used to be more careful about that at least.) But the best evidence of Kazin's timid academicism is his fondness for Trilling and Barzun (Og and Doeg). Edmund Wilson, on the other hand, warred with Babbitt and More, the academicians of his time, and warred very well. Kazin is always pounding his chest too about how well he writes. But the truth is that his writing is extremely labored and pompous: *Kazin non cantat.* Kazin is incapable, for example, of getting off the brilliant parodies that Edmund Wilson used to do. But the greatest irony of all in Kazin's discussion of critical writing is yet to come. After all he says about the necessity of the critic's writing for a general audience, Kazin decides that the critic really writes *for himself:* "he writes to put his own ideas in order. . . ." Then why publish at all, for any kind of audience! This is only typical, I am afraid, of the way Alfred Kazin thinks. Another example of it is his insistence that the critic be strongly partisan to one set of ideas. Let us admit, for the moment, the half-truth in this and see what Kazin does with it. His heroes are Blake, Whitman, Lawrence, and Freud. He has already hedged because obviously Blake and Freud, at least, cannot be reconciled, and it is impossible to be strongly partisan to each of two contradictory sets of ideas. But Kazin goes on to say literary works can only be judged "for their fulfillment of the goals which they have independently set." Then why does the critic have to be partisan? Each work will provide him with the set of ideas needed to evaluate it, and the critic's own ideas will only get in the way. Pretty clearly, Kazin is no thinker.

Alfred Kazin is a competent reviewer and, within a severely restricted range (Dreiser, Sholom Aleichem), a good essayist. These are not attainments to be scorned. But they are not attainments that will carry a book of 500 pages either. For Kazin lacks the range to make his collection an adequate chronicle of our letters. And he lacks the analytic power to make it an adequate criticism.

—Warren Coffey

Pale Fire. By Vladimir Nabokov. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 315 p.p. $5.00.

Pale Fire, Vladimir Nabokov's latest book, is not an easy work to "place." The most casual reader will do full justice to its imaginative and splendid English, and to its cleverness. But the author—to change a single word in a line of James Joyce's—feels himself "a Russian writer in foreign parts," and the reader senses this throughout all Nabokov's writings. In his poem, "An Evening of Russian Poetry," the Visiting Speaker speaks of the world "Beyond the seas where I have lost a sceptre." The inevitable question period comes. "Is your prosody like ours?"

Well, Emmy, our pentamenter may seem / to foreign ears as if it could not rouse / the limp iambus from its pyrrhic dream. / But close your eyes and listen to the line.

The Visiting Speaker's *our* means "Russian"; Emmy's *ours* is ours. When it is time for him to receive the grateful good-byes:

"How would you say 'delightful talk' in Russian?" / "How would you say 'good night'?" / Oh, that would be: / Bezónnitza, tvoy vzór oomyl i stráshen; / lubóv moyá, otstoópnika prosteé. / (Insomnia, your stare is dull and ashen, / My love, forgive me this apostasy.)

His love, in such a foreign world, is his art, and literature and life become the terms in a kind of equation. One thinks of many scattered similes that lead from "life" to "literature": that street, for instance, in *The Gift*, "which begins in a post-office and ends in a church, like an epistolary novel"; or the reflection by which sentiment is held neatly at bay in the poem whose first line runs, "The room a dying poet took . . .":

A poet's death is, after all, / a question of technique, a neat / enjambment, a melodic fall.

This Russian writer of glorious English disdains weighty symbols that establish for "literature" a meaning in "life" and so keep both firmly in their place. The poem which is the basis of *Pale Fire* puts the point clearly:

I feel I understand / Existence, or at least a minute part / Of my existence, only through my art, / In terms of combinational delight.

The commentator, luckily, left this alone; and so, it seems, have the reviewers.

By this time presumably everyone interested knows what *Pale Fire* is "about." It is described on the title-page as a novel. The poem "Pale Fire"—whose title, from Shakespeare's *Timon*, already suggests the theme of literature's ambivalent relation to "life"—occupies some forty pages. It is preceded by a short foreword and followed by over two hundred pages of what purports to be an elucidatory comment on the poem itself. The poet, a professor named John Shade, seems to be writing a reflective, and sometimes narrative, poem in couplets. The commentator, however, a rather mad academic next-door neighbor named Charles Kinbote, fancies that the poem grew out of suggestions and materials offered by himself and so feels a strong proprietary interest in the poem left virtually complete at the author's death. His contributions, it is true, are hardly visible to the uninstructed reader, but that is just the reason for the commentary, Dr. Kinbote had favored his poet neighbor with richly circumstantial accounts of the vicissitudes of Charles the Beloved, king of his native Zembla. It gradually appears that the commentator considers himself to be Charles the Beloved. The assassin who mistakenly killed the poet had in fact intended to kill Charles the Beloved himself.

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With these materials Nabokov's "combinational delight" makes free.

Mary McCarthy's brilliant essay on *Pale Fire*, printed in *New Republic* and then in *Encounter*, offers any reader who falters in the pursuit of the story behind the story ready and reliable help. Nabokov's virtuosity is almost equalled by Miss McCarthy's determined tracking, so successful that on that there is little left to say. One might remark, though, that the names of the three campus lakes, Omega, Ozero and Zero, though glossed as corrupted Indian names by Dr. Kinbote, were of course suggested by *ozero*, which is simply the Russian word for "lake." O-zero, the minimally little lake, presumably suggested its opposite, O-mega, and then just plain O (Zero). But more important than the wordsmith game—poet and commentator both teach, of course, at Wordsmith College—is the recurrent Russian resonance. The Zemblan language, to judge by the commentator's not infrequent citations of his native tongue—is a kind of pastiche of Russian and something that, rather cavalierly, one assumes might be Low Dutch. The English-speaking reader is almost continuously aware of a certain strange presence lying just outside his habitual range. Miss McCarthy has solved the puzzle part of the book with real panache, and in understandable exultation feels entitled to pronounce the book a masterpiece of this century.

Her suggestion as to the "placing" of the book is less happy. She suggests an analogy with Wordsworth's *The Prelude*. In his preface to the translation of *Invitation to a Beheading* Nabokov claims, one hopes playfully, to have been compared to a great variety of named writers—"Tolstoevsky," Kafka, even Mary McCarthy; Pushkin is followed in this list by Ruskin—presumably a salute to the American pronunciation of the Russian writer's name (compare the traveler in *Pale Fire* who has seen "Mon Blon" and the Matterhorn). Whatever its merits, this game of affinities is obviously one that any number can play. I would therefore suggest that a far likelier entry than *The Prelude* is the stylish masterpiece that Nabokov has been engaged for years in translating and commenting on, Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*.

Pushkin's dedicatory verses to this "novel in verse," rendered into what Nabokov elsewhere calls "honest roadside prose," run something like this: "Accept this collection of parti-colored cantos, half absurd, half sad; half folksy and half lofty"—a not inexact characterization of the poem "Pale Fire." In his verses "On translating 'Eugene Onegin,'" dated January 8, 1955, Nabokov speaks of the poet's (translator's) art and refers obliquely to the apparently very extensive commentary with which he is furnishing the poem—the whole edition is to be in four volumes, though the poem itself would fit easily into one. What may be regarded perhaps as a specimen of this commentary appeared recently in *Encounter*, a very long and detailed contribution to Pushkin's genealogy, occasioned by a glancing reference in a single line of Canto Two. Nabokov concludes his poem just mentioned with these lines:

This is my task—a poet's patience /
And scholiastic passion blent: / The
shadow of your monument.

"Pale Fire" seems to me a kind of twentieth-century Russian-American poem in the manner of *Eugene Onegin*, even an "imitation" in that now almost lost sense in which Johnson's "Vanity of Human Wishes" imitates Juvenal. *Pale Fire* is moody and miscellaneous, touched with pathos, dancing with irony.

Even *Pale Fire's* commentary may somehow have its origins in the commentary being gathered by its ironic author for his translation of Pushkin. The scholiast Nabokov and the artist Nabokov must have some interesting encounters. *Créer, c'est choisir*, but a translator soon finds that the converse is equally true. He speaks for the poet who is gone, and of necessity must presume to know his mind on all but the very few points where he may feel obliged to confess uncertainty. No doubt he soon finds himself discovering his own concerns in his author, if not clearly then by implication; even giving his author now and then the fateful nudge that will make him speak up more clearly. Perhaps some such experiences presided over the coming-to-be of Dr. Kinbote.

In other respects, Dr. Kinbote (alias Botkin) is another of the massively misplaced émigré intellectuals that people Nabokov's fiction. Kinbote is certainly mad, tiresome, unreliable, snoopy; he lacks all the American virtues. But more than one bravura bit of humorous description suggests the pathos of his life so far away from Zembla ("the land"):

Whatever I touched on the first day of my stay [in a furnished house rented for a year from Judge Goldsworth] yielded a specimen of Goldsworthiana. I unlocked the medicine chest in the second bathroom, and out fluttered a message advising me that the slit for discarded safety blades was too full for use. I opened the icebox, and it warned me with a bark that "no national specialties with odors hard to get rid of" should be placed therein.

What could be less Zemblan, less Russian—than this rented house?

The book's ingenious form—poem and commentary that almost becomes a story in itself—obviously threatens to clog the reader's way, but never quite does. To surmount the inherent scrappiness of two hundred pages of notes, Nabokov turns some into little essays or narratives of considerable length, and often reduces the short ones to a sharply modeled sentence or two; thus the reader is not continually leafing back and forth. Narrative tightness and unbroken mood are not so much sacrificed as dispensed with. While probably not the great modern novel that Mary McCarthy acclaims it, the book is a delight to browser and sleuth, and above all to the reader of poetry.

—John B. Gleason

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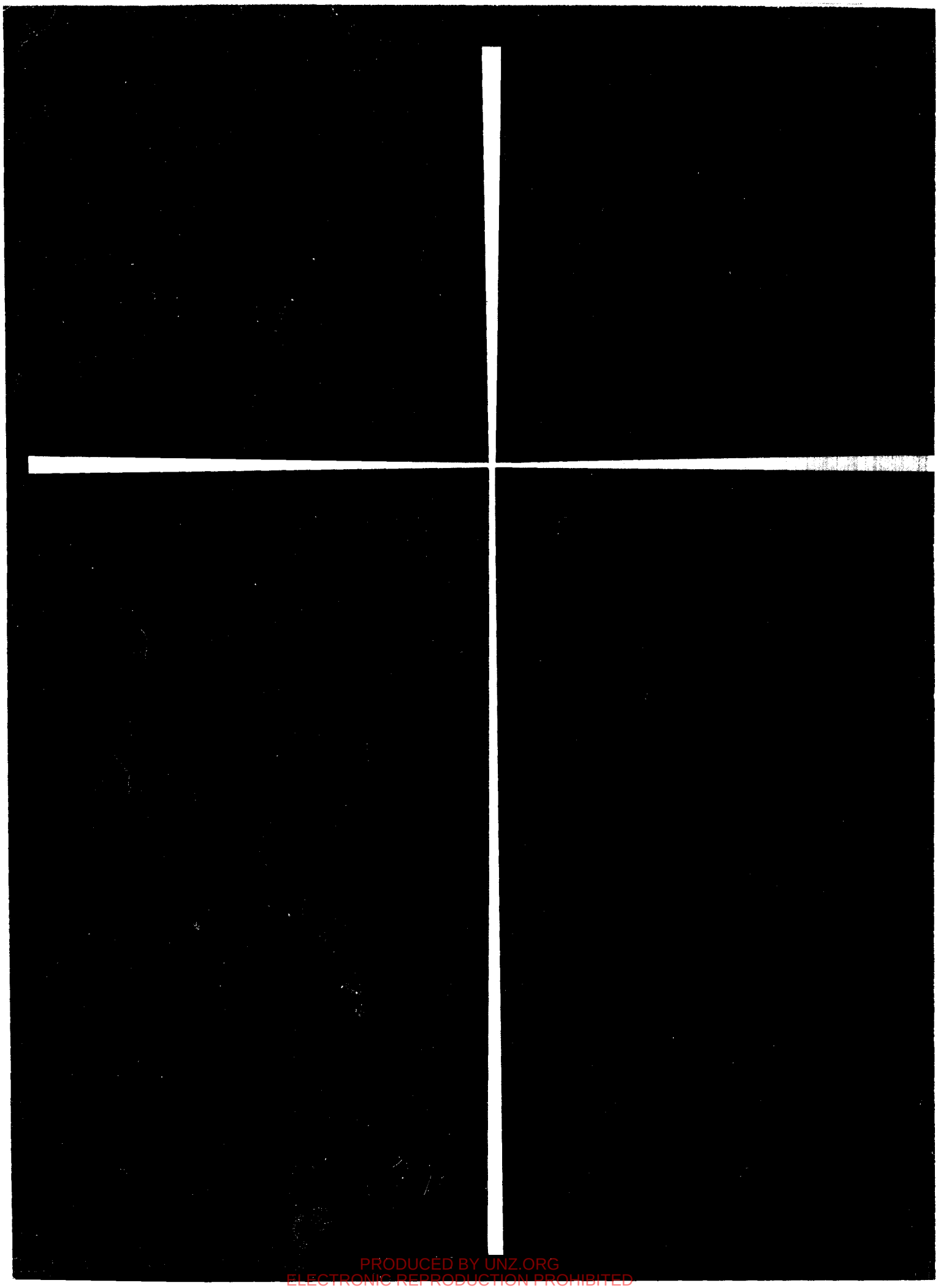
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